A WAYFARER IN WALES

9-B-5

W. WATKIN DAVIES

Hooper

$3.00

SO YOU'RE GOING TO ENGLAND!

By Clara E. Laughlin

THIS is the third volume of the successful series which Miss Laughlin inaugurated in 1924 with 'So You're Going to Paris!' and continued in 1925 with 'So You're Going to Italy!' In it she has divided the space between London as it may be seen in a week or ten days, and short trips through the most interesting and picturesque parts of England.

Her book is made up of itineraries with minute directions as to distances, time, conditions for sightseeing, hotels, restaurants, and everything most serviceable for those going to England. She has a great deal in it for the motor travelers, but also tells how to accomplish the same things by other transportation.

It is, as was the first of the series, 'the one book to carry all the way from your house to the ship, on the passage across, and for weeks thereafter while you are abroad.'—*Chicago News.*

Illustrated, pocket size, uniform with the other volumes of the series.

***Cloth,* $3.00** ***Leather,* $4.00**

WALES
IRIS
Amlwch
Holyhead
Holy I.
Angle
Aberffraw
Menai S.
Carnarvon Bay
Criccieth
Pwllheli
Braich-y-Pwll
Bardsey I.
CARDIGAN BAY
Aberys
Aberayron
Newquay
Cemmaes Hd
Cardigan
Cenarth
Newcastle
Kilgerran
Llandyssul
Strumble Hd
Goodwick
Newport
Fishguard
Eglwyswrw
St Davids Hd
St Davids
Whitland
St Brides Bay
Haverfordwest
Ferry
Skomer I.
St Anns Hd
Pembroke
Tenby
Caldy I.
Carmarthen
St Gowans Hd
Worms Hd
BRISTOL

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive Collection
Property of the Houghton Mifflin Co. Please do not remove this card. Books must be returned within 2 days

A WAYFARER IN WALES

THE PEAK OF SNOWDON AND LLYN GLASYN

A WAYFARER IN WALES

BY

W. WATKIN DAVIES

M.A., F.R.Hist.S., Barrister-at-Law

MINISTER OF EDGBASTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

WITH TWENTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS
AND A MAP

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1930

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

ALL the writers in this series have emphasized the fact that their books are not guide-books; and I perforce must do the same. The main difference, I take it, is that whereas the writer of a guide-book feels that he must say a little about everything, and above all maintain a sense of proportion, the Wayfarer roams at will, refusing here to look at something which is of world-wide fame, turning aside there to pay homage to something of value that has hitherto remained without praise.

I have tried to write for all genuine Wayfarers, whether they travel by train, by car, or on foot. In a mountainous country like Wales, however, it is obvious that to the pedestrian only are the chief glories open, and I have not hesitated to make his interests paramount.

There are many good guide-books to Wales. In particular I would mention the volume in the 'Blue Guides' series, edited by F. M. Muirhead. Some book of that sort will be needed by the traveller to supplement the present volume.

W. W. D.

April, 1930

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	v
I.	WALES OF THE WELSH	1
II.	THE APPROACH TO WALES	20
III.	THE DEE	29
IV.	THE MERIONETH HIGHLANDS	48
V.	IN THE HEART OF MERIONETH	61
VI.	THE CAMBRIAN COAST	90
VII.	CAERNARVONSHIRE	110
VIII.	THE NORTH WALES COAST	136
IX.	THROUGH MID-WALES	140
X.	CARDIGANSHIRE	149
XI.	CARMARTHENSHIRE	163
XII.	PEMBROKESHIRE	171
XIII.	RADNORSHIRE AND BRECKNOCK	181
XIV.	THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH	195
	INDEX	209

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAP OF WALES . . . . . *Front endpaper*
(*From a drawing by Frank Adams*)

THE PEAK OF SNOWDON AND LLYN GLASYN . *Frontispiece*
(*Photo: G. W. Thompson*)

Facing page

MOUTH OF THE TOWY FROM LLANSTEPHAN * . . . 8

HARLECH CASTLE † 14

THE SWALLOW FALLS, BETTWS-Y-COED * 30

LLANGOLLEN AND DINAS BRAN * 30

VALLE CRUCIS ABBEY † 34

THE PILLAR OF ELISEG † 38

CADER IDRIS AND LLYN-Y-CAE * 84

BARMOUTH ESTUARY * 94

DYFFRYN, MOELFRE ‡ 98

LLANBEDR, BWLCH DRWS ARDUDWY ‡ 100

ROMAN STEPS, CWM-BYCHAN ‡ 102

LLYN CWM-BYCHAN ‡ 104

BARMOUTH VIADUCT AND CADER IDRIS † . . . 108

CRICCIETH * 108

OLD BRIDGE OVER RIVER SCETHIN, MERIONETHSHIRE . 110
(*Photo: Author*)

THE PASS OF ABERGLASYN * 110

NANT BRIDGE, CAERNARVON † 114

CAERNARVON CASTLE 118
(*Photo: Photochrom Co. Ltd.*)

SNOWDON, FROM BWLCH GLAS † 126

CAPEL CURIG † 130

Facing page

LLYN IDWAL † 134

CHAPEL AT SOAR-Y-MYNYDD 160
(Photo: 'Western Mail', Cardiff)

A RADNOR VALLEY † 182

THE BLACK MOUNTAINS OF BRECON * 192

THE WORMS HEAD, GOWER * 204

LUDLOW *. 206

* *Photos: F. Frith & Co. Ltd.*
† „ *Valentine & Sons Ltd.*
‡ „ *Judges Ltd.*

A WAYFARER IN WALES

A WAYFARER IN WALES

CHAPTER I

WALES OF THE WELSH

THE majority of sensible folk who have had a fairly long and varied experience of holiday-making have come to the conclusion that an essential ingredient in the composition of a perfect holiday is that the locality visited should be foreign. This implies not the slightest disparagement of one's native land. It carries with it no verdict on the relative beauty of the scenery, the salubrity of the climate, or the amiability of the population. Undoubtedly the ugly little watering-places on the coast of Normandy cannot compare with the bewitching picturesqueness of many of the tiny fishing ports on the opposite shore of the English Channel. No foreign town excels London in interest. The beauty of Oxford or Bath is fully equal to that of Florence, Prague, or Salzburg. Sublimity apart, I am very doubtful whether the valleys of the Alps excel in sheer loveliness the very best that Cumberland has to offer. We have castles as romantic as those of the Rhine, abbeys as impressive as the Grande Chartreuse, cathedrals as exquisite as Chartres. All this may readily be admitted; yet the fact remains that, for the Englishman, these places can be nothing but 'home', and 'at home' is the very last thing you want to feel when on holiday. With all their charms

they still lack one thing needful, and that something so important that without it the rest counts for little—the quality of 'foreignness'.

Who does not remember with delight the thrill at the first appearance of the jabbering crowd of blue-bloused sailors and porters as the Channel boat approached the quay at Calais or Ostende? Who, in day-dreams long after, does not see the vision of long Continental express trains, with their wonderful assortment of place-names printed upon them? The Customs House is annoying; but for the innocent and the good-tempered it has a joy of its own. Then the delicious ham-rolls and cherries bought from smiling French girls on the platform, the shrill whistle of the engine, the clatter and the bumping, the sight of the flat, well-tilled fields and the queer houses, carts, and peasant folk, as we dash on towards our goal—Switzerland, the Black Forest, the Riviera, or Italy. Nobody except a schoolboy feels this thrill when he enters King's Cross or Paddington. Travelling in England may be pleasant, but it can hardly be exciting. We arrive at our hotel, and if it is quite comfortable we exclaim: 'Why, this is just like home!' When we say that we no doubt honestly intend to praise: really it is the most damning verdict that could be pronounced upon a holiday place.

The patient reader who has got thus far will at this point perhaps angrily exclaim: 'How, if all that be true, can you have the face to invite us to accompany you through Wales? Surely Wales is only a part of England, just like the Lake District, the Peak, or Dartmoor?' Thousands of English people, in all probability, visit Wales every summer with that idea firmly fixed in their minds, with the result that, while enjoying the scenery of the country, they entirely miss what is its real charm. What does, in fact,

make Wales worthy of the attention of the Wayfarer is that it is a foreign country as well as a beautiful one. Of course, for next-door neighbours like the English Wales is not so strikingly foreign as France or Belgium. But then neither is France or Belgium so foreign as Hungary or Bulgaria, nor those two countries as Tibet or Abyssinia. There is such a thing as an irreducible minimum of 'foreignness', and that irreducible minimum is possessed by Wales. Unfortunately the real Wales has of late been largely covered over by a veneer of Anglo-Saxondom, and like all the countries of Western Europe it has suffered the process of cultural levelling which, in the last fifty years, has dressed us all alike, taught us to eat the same kind of food, to build the same kind of streets, and largely to think the same thoughts. But down beneath the surface the real Wales is still there, ready to reveal itself to every sympathetic traveller. There is far too little of such sympathy, and of intelligent interest, evinced by the average Englishman who takes his family to Wales for the summer holiday. The crowds that one finds on the beach at Aberystwyth, Tenby, or Llandudno on a day in August are of much the same mental quality as the crowds that one finds on the ski-ing slopes of Switzerland on a day in January: that is to say, they are shallow men and women who take not the slightest interest in the people whose guests they are, make no endeavour to learn their language, or even to pronounce correctly the place-names they are compelled to use, and display no curiosity with regard to the religion, politics, laws or manners of the country. For them the country is simply a 'playground'. Doubtless they have their reward; but it is not the reward sought after by the true traveller.

Of course this is not so of all, and I trust it is not true of the majority of English people who visit Wales every

year, and who love its sea and its mountains, its lakes and its valleys. A great surgeon, speaking to me some time ago about Wales as a holiday haunt, remarked: 'What I like so much about Wales is that you feel at once that you are in a foreign country.' His trained scientific intellect had led him immediately to make this discovery; but it is a discovery which the most ordinary men and women can easily make if they have the inclination to do so, and if they find a proper guide by the way.

Throughout the pages which follow it will be my endeavour to reveal the charms of Wales as a foreign land, for it is in this respect that all books on Wales written by Englishmen, with two or three illustrious exceptions, have so lamentably failed. This book is in no sense a history of Wales; but as no country can be properly understood or enjoyed by a traveller who is ignorant of its past, a few pages must be spared for a brief bird's-eye view. I myself have told the story of Wales in one of the volumes of the Home University Library, and to that, as well as to the many better and bigger books, I refer the reader whose appetite for greater detail has been whetted.

When the Romans began to take an active interest in the island which we now call Great Britain, somewhere about the middle of the first century A.D., they found the land occupied by a number of tribes to which we have given collectively the name 'Ancient Britons'. Closer investigation would reveal many differences among them, for they were a composite people formed out of successive waves of invaders that had come over from the Continent in the course of the preceding three to six thousand years. They were linked together by the possession of a common Celtic language, and by similar religious, legal, and social customs. Although brave and pugnacious, they naturally were unable

to withstand the disciplined valour of the Roman legions, and by degrees were completely subjugated. Rome extended her sway northwards to the Wall of Hadrian, and westward to the shore of the Irish Sea and its connecting channels. There was no distinction between England and Wales; both constituted one Roman province.

But the occupation of Wales was less thorough than that of England. The country was more distant, and on account of its mountains and bogs more inaccessible. From the agricultural point of view it possessed less fertile land; while its mineral wealth, though certainly exploited to some extent, did not count for much. For strategic reasons, however, it was natural that the Romans should desire to conquer this western land, especially as the Silures of Monmouth and Glamorgan under their great leader Caractacus were a powerful foe to reckon with, always ready to raid the adjoining parts of England. These warlike people were finally defeated by the Roman General Ostorius Scapula, probably at the spot now called Caer Caradoc, near Church Stretton. To keep the Silures in subjection the first of the great Roman forts in Wales was built at Caerleon on the River Usk.

Following on the death of Ostorius, in A.D. 52, the Silures recovered a degree of liberty; but with the arrival of a new Roman general, Quintus Veranius, in A.D. 58, the struggle recommenced. The real attack upon Wales, however, began with that consummate soldier Suetonius Paulinus. He adopted the plan of erecting strong forts at various strategic points all over Britain, from which the legions could control the surrounding country. Two of these forts were placed close to the Welsh border of later times, one at Chester (Deva), the other at Wroxeter (Viroconium). The great desire of Suetonius was to conquer the hitherto un-

molested island of Anglesey (Mona). There was the home of the Druids, the last remnants of the cruel custodians of Celtic learning, protected by the surrounding sea, and by the mighty mountain barrier of Snowdonia. Flat-bottomed boats were constructed, and the soldiers safely conveyed across the Menai Straits. There, for a moment, the legionaries were appalled by the weird sight of the Druids drawn up in a body, with uplifted arms, calling down imprecations upon the heads of the profane invaders; while women, with dishevelled hair and with lighted torches in their hands, ran in and out among the ranks. But the terror of the soldiers was but momentary: they pressed forward, completely routed the opposing army, burnt their camp, cut down the sacred groves of oak, and cleared away the last emblems of Druidism.

It was in the hundred years after A.D. 78 that the task of organizing Wales on Roman lines was seriously proceeded with. Throughout its history the Roman occupation of Wales was largely military in character. Wales was a poor country, and there was little to tempt the Romans to settle in it for life. The towns that came to be built were consequently military rather than civil; but whatever their character and purpose, they were both numerous and important. The most considerable of them, perhaps, was Chester, long the home of the Twentieth Legion, from which it derived its Welsh name Caer Lleon (Fort of the Legion). Chester became the permanent home of the legion; and around the fort a thriving town sprang up, with baths, theatre, and all those amenities considered so indispensable by the Romans. Right down the ages to the present day Chester has remained, as it were, a Welsh outpost. From its fine old walls the plains of Flint, the uplands of Denbighshire, and towering beyond them the

peaks of Snowdonia can clearly be discerned. As for the Roman soldier, so too for the pacific traveller of to-day, it is one of the chief gateways into the desired land.

As everybody knows, the Romans were incomparable road-makers, and they have left in Wales a rich legacy of finely planned highways. From Chester one of these great roads ran to Wroxeter. From this another branched off, and ran along the hill-sides to Conway (Caerhun) and Caernarvon (Segontium). In the course of our journeyings we shall visit these places, for they are rich in historic interest. There were several Roman forts in North Wales, but with the single exception of Caernarvon no towns of any consequence. The almost inaccessible valleys and ravines of Merioneth, now the paradise of the walker, were kept in subjection by the triangle formed by Tomen-y-Mur, now a solitary mound which the traveller by road can see on the way from Trawsfynydd to Festiniog, Caergai near Bala, and Pennal near Machynlleth.

Roman roads must have been fairly numerous in Wales, for the legionaries, burdened with their immense load of arms and utensils, demanded smooth and straight surfaces to march upon, but they are extremely difficult to trace at the present day. One thing is quite certain, and that is that the majority of mountain tracks pointed out to the too credulous modern tourist as Roman roads belong either to prehistoric or else to comparatively late mediæval times. Some of them, however, are of indisputable genuineness. There is the famous highway running from Conway, over moorland and mountain, to Tomen-y-Mur, Caergai, and Pennal, and thence on into South Wales, to which the name Sarn Helen (Helen's Causeway) is given. Much of it is obliterated; but for long stretches it can be clearly traced. Another road leads from Tomen-y-Mur to Chester. Every

visitor to the shores of Cardigan Bay at any point between Barmouth and Criccieth is told, and rightly told, to visit the Roman Steps, a flagged path, some two miles long, and still perfect for yards on end, leading over one of the passes of Ardudwy at a height of some fifteen hundred feet, and connecting the seacoast with the elevated plateau of Trawsfynydd and Festiniog. Mid-Wales possessed in Roman times the forts of Caersws, Caerflos, Y Gaer, and Castell Collen. The passage of the River Teifi, that beautiful stream which flows through Cardiganshire, beloved of artist and fisherman alike, was guarded by a fort at Llanio. On the Towy stood Carmarthen, a place about which I shall have a good deal to say later on. In Pembrokeshire there do not appear to have been any Roman settlements or roads; in all probability the country was left to its own devices just as Cornwall was. On the upper reaches of the Towy stood Llandovery. From thence a road led to Y Gaer near Brecon, then following the valley of the Usk to Abergavenny and Caerleon. Beyond Caerleon, between the Usk and the Wye, lay Caerwent, where so much of archæological interest has recently been discovered. On the Bristol Channel there were forts at Cardiff, as well as at the mouths of the Neath and the Loughor.

Any country has reason to be proud of having at one time found a place within the *Pax Romana*; and happy is the traveller who, when exploring, can discover for himself tangible evidence of the fact. How infinitely the poorer, despite other charms, would Trier be without its magnificent Porta Nigra, or Nîmes without its colossal amphitheatre, or Susa without its great triumphal arch, or the French coast by Monte Carlo without the towering column of La Turbie! Wales has not much to show for its one-time membership of the Roman Empire: all the more reason

MOUTH OF THE TOWY FROM LLANSTEPHAN

why the traveller should seek diligently for what there is—a few crumbling walls, some green mounds, and the straight, grass-grown roads. But the influence of the Romans upon the Welsh people is perhaps best attested by the large number of words in common usage derived from Latin. One need be no expert etymologist to recognize the parentage of the following Welsh words: *pont* (bridge), *dant* (tooth), *eglwys* (church), *canwyll* (candle), *ceffyl* (horse), *mur* (wall), *saeth* (arrow). Dozens of others could be cited. One thing is certain: Wales, at the departure of the Romans, was a highly civilized land, civilized in its political ideas and laws, and Christian in religion. A love of literature, of art, of independence, and of unity had been so firmly rooted that, in spite of the welter of lawlessness and bloodshed which the unhappy country had to endure during the subsequent eight hundred years, they persisted through it all. Wales was to enjoy nothing comparable with the tranquillity and good government of the Roman period until the great Tudor sovereigns began to turn their thoughts and to direct their splendid political instinct towards the little land from which they derived the best part of their blood.

The foreigner who visits Wales ought now to be able to see why the Welsh people feel that they have a right to live, and a right to be themselves rather than imitation Englishmen. They know that they are older in civilization than the English, that from the proud Roman days they have maintained unbroken the continuity of their cultural, if not of their political, life. For when the Romans left Britain in the early fifth century, all that we now call England was flooded with German barbarians, who ruled the country for centuries, obliterating all traces of Roman culture, and turning back the clock of progress some

hundreds of years. But Wales resisted their advance, and gradually built up a number of native kingdoms, handing down what had been learnt from Rome, and adding to it new elements from age to age. It was during these Dark Ages, when England had sunk back into pure savagery, that Wales, together with the rest of the scattered Celtic family, produced the glorious mythology contained in the Mabinogion, and the splendid poetry, half history, half fiction, of the Arthurian legends. It was also during this period that St. David, Bishop of Minevia, made so profound an impression upon the country that he became its Patron Saint. Few must be the Welshmen who do not meet together on the first day of March to toast the immortal memory of Dewi Sant. The Romans had failed to make the Welsh people town-dwellers like themselves. They remained an agricultural and pastoral folk living in scattered villages. In consequence of this no buildings have come down to us dating from the period (about A.D. 400 to A.D. 1100) when Wales was completely independent. Unfortunately, it is a fact that almost every historic building in the country marks the coming of an invader: the camps and grass-grown roads came from the Romans; the castles and abbeys came from the Normans; the fine old manor houses were brought, if not by Englishmen, at least by Welshmen who had learnt how to build them in the London of the Tudors and Stuarts; the hideous rows of lodging-houses which now line the Welsh coast are mere copies of what one sees at Brighton and other places of like fame!

The national life of Wales was next broken in upon by the Normans, who, when the fertile lands of England had failed to satiate their greed, pressed on towards the western mountains, and afterwards across the sea to Ireland. By that time what we know as Wales had definitely come into

being; that is to say a boundary, which has not altered much since that day, had been drawn between it and England. The Saxon leader Ceawlin had, in 577, marched up the Severn valley and won a great victory over the native inhabitants at Deorham, the result of which was that the invaders reached the Bristol Channel, thus cutting off the people of Devon and Cornwall from their Celtic kinsmen in Wales. Some little time later Ethelfrith, King of the Angles, marched against Chester and established his power as far as the Irish Sea. This meant that a wedge was driven in between the people of Wales and their Celtic cousins in Strathclyde. Meanwhile all along the border English power was being consolidated under the able and vigorous Kings of Mercia; and soon Offa's Dyke was raised to mark the boundary. This famous Dyke, running roughly from the mouth of the Dee to that of the Severn, still stands in places. Let the traveller by Great Western Railway, between Shrewsbury and Ruabon, with his face towards the north, be on the look-out for it on the left-hand side. For some miles it runs parallel with the railway, a wall of green mounds some six feet high. In spring-time it is covered with primroses, and its beautiful and peaceful aspect is not in the least suggestive of the sanguinary contests which must have been of almost daily occurrence in its neighbourhood in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Thus by the middle of the seventh century Wales had assumed what were to remain ever afterwards, to all intents and purposes, its geographical limits. Internally the country was forming itself into the principal territorial divisions, which remained until superseded by the shire system introduced by the Kings of England. For some six hundred years, namely from the seventh century until the thirteenth, the life of Wales was not seriously affected from

the outside. Norman barons came, stole fat lands, built castles to guard them, but except within the precincts of the little towns which sprang up at the foot of their castle walls they did not interfere. Thus Wales escaped both the good and the evil of feudalism. It had its own laws, different in many fundamental respects from the Common Law of England. Welsh had become a well-developed language, with a fine literature, and was universally spoken by high and low. Moreover, it had an ancient form of Christianity which owed nothing to Canterbury.

The Norman barons, though they only touched the fringes, showed how Wales might one day be conquered; and incidentally they indicated to the Wayfarer of subsequent centuries the best approaches into the country. They grasped the important topographical fact that the chief mountain ranges run from north to south, presenting their flanks towards England. For the most part they would be impassable in those days when there were practically no roads, and when forests and morasses covered a much wider area than they do now. But there are convenient gaps between these mountain masses. If we put aside narrow valleys which could have been rendered almost impregnable by a small defending force, there are three gateways from England into Wales. The first is at Chester. This the Romans had discovered; and from it they, and subsequently the Normans and English, followed the left bank of the estuary of the Dee, and then the narrow strip of coast-land which, skirting the Penmaenmawr, leads straight into the fertile lands of Anglesey and south-west Caernarvonshire. The second gateway is at Shrewsbury, from which a broad and fertile valley stretches right into the heart of Mid-Wales. Hereford is the third: it is the natural starting-point for an excursion, bellicose or pacific, into the counties of South

Wales. At each of these places a Norman castle was built, and from them a long chain of other castles was gradually constructed. Soon the whole border and South Wales, and to a lesser extent the North as well, was studded with them. Mostly rebuilt in Plantagenet times, they stand to-day, some of them in almost perfect preservation, others merely a mouldering bit of wall. All of them are picturesque, and all are brimful of history and romance. How the native inhabitants of Wales must have detested the steel-clad robbers who built these proud and aggressive keeps! But it must be admitted that Wales to-day would be a much less fascinating country for the traveller if their ruins did not exist!

Henry I and Henry II had claimed lordship over Wales; but it was Edward I who made the title effective, and who definitely removed the ancient landmarks. He defeated Llewelyn, the last of the great native princes of Wales, and then proceeded to organize the country on English lines. From the castle of Rhuddlan, near St. Asaph, he issued, in 1284, the comprehensive Statute of Wales. Anglesey, Caernarvon, and Merioneth were made into shires under the jurisdiction of the Justice of Snowdon. Likewise Flint became a shire under the jurisdiction of the Justice of Chester. In the South Cardigan and Carmarthen were made shires under the Justice of South Wales. The main body of Welsh law was to remain in force. For the protection of the land, and especially for the cowing of the wild and turbulent Gwynedd, a chain of the newly devised concentric castles was built—Conway, Beaumaris, Caernarvon, Criccieth, and Harlech. In order to break the old tribal system, and in order to Anglicize the population as much as possible, the growth of towns was encouraged; and these were given special privi-

leges by Royal Charter. Cardigan, Builth, Montgomery, Welshpool, Rhuddlan, Aberystwyth, Caernarvon, Conway, Criccieth, Harlech, Caerwys, Beaumaris, and Newburgh were among those which received charters from Edward I; while his successor gave charters to Bala, Llanfyllin, Cardiff, Usk, Caerleon, Newport, Cowbridge, and Neath. It is not easy to realize, when spending a holiday at Criccieth, that the trim little watering-place is a township of royal origin, dating back to the thirteenth century: only the great walls of the old castle, perched aloft on their rocky foundation, serve as a reminder. Thus castle and town jointly made war upon the national life of Wales. It has been noted that in the towns which Edward founded in Wales English was the language of the people down to the close of the sixteenth century. How vigorous is the native tongue may be inferred from the fact that practically all of them, in the course of the subsequent two centuries, became thoroughly Welsh.

As an independent State Wales had now ceased to exist: henceforward the struggle was not so much with the purpose of winning back that which had been lost as to protect the native language and culture from extinction. Except for the stirring episode of the rebellion of Owen Glyndwr against Henry IV, Wales remained loyal to the English kings; and that loyalty became a patriotic sentiment when the more than half Welsh Tudors came to the throne in the person of Henry VII. Thus we have seen how Wales got its frontiers, its territorial divisions, its castles, and its towns; a word must be said about the ecclesiastical buildings—cathedrals, abbeys, and parish churches—which are so thickly scattered all over the land.

When St. Augustine came from Rome in A.D. 597 to convert the pagan English tribes Wales was already Christian. Legends have accumulated freely about the early

HARLECH CASTLE

history of pre-English Britain. According to one tradition St. Paul himself visited the island. According to another Joseph of Arimathea was the first to bring the glad tidings, as the beautiful ruins of the chapel dedicated to his memory at Glastonbury testify. A third legend has it that St. Andrew brought the Gospel, and became thenceforth the Patron Saint of the northern portion of the island. Yet another legend tells how Bran, the father of Caractacus, accompanied his captive son to Rome, became a convert to Christianity, then returned to his native land as a missionary. All, however, that we can say with certainty is that Christianity had made good progress in Britain many years before its adoption as the official religion of the Roman Empire early in the fourth century. The earliest Christian building that has been discovered is the one at Silchester. Of the progress of the new religion in Wales one must speak with great caution. Wales had been the last home of the Druids, and the people clung to their old mythology. Centuries even after the adoption of Christianity the ancient deities—Llud, Merlin, Ceridwen, Coil, Olwen—shared in popular esteem the fame of the newer saints of the Christian calendar.

When Christianity did arrive in Wales, sometime in the third century, it came in the form of monasticism. This was not the type of monasticism which became so famous afterwards under the name Benedictinism. Its pattern was not to be found at Monte Cassino, but in the Egyptian desert, where abbots ruled over a number of associated, but otherwise independent, cells. From Egypt the fashion had travelled to St. Honorat, one of the beautiful Isles of Lérins. There the great St. Patrick himself lived for a time; and a painting on the walls of the monastic refectory commemorates his expulsion of all venomous reptiles from

the island. From Lérins the new ideal spread to Arles and the cities of Provence; then up the Rhone valley and on to Tours, where it received a warm welcome from St. Martin. It then came to Britain, where it struck root and produced, in the course of the next two centuries, a large number of saints, the most celebrated of whom were David, Patrick, and Columba. That the British Church was full of vigour is proved by the rise of Pelagius at the beginning of the fifth century; for the presence of heretics in a Church is always a sure indication of vitality. So firm a hold did this type of Christian life lay upon the Celtic people of the British Isles that, despite the pressure of the Roman Church leagued with the Norman warrior, it lingered on well into the twelfth century.

Many of the little parish churches of Wales date back, in part at least, to those early days of ecclesiastical independence. Wales had also its monasteries; not princely foundations like Fountains or St. Albans, but small houses, deriving what wealth they possessed from acres of barren mountain land. As far back as the sixth century the Welsh monasteries of Bangor Iscoed, and Llantwit Major were famous throughout Christendom. When the first phase of Celtic monasticism had passed away, it was the Rule of St. Benedict which seemed to find most favour in Wales; for in South Wales alone there were some fifteen Benedictine foundations, many of them, however, only cells belonging to some foreign abbey which used them solely for the purpose of augmenting its own revenues. The great Cluniac reformation of the tenth century had singularly little influence upon the religious life of Wales, and only three priories were established in the country. It was the Cistercian Order that seems to have won the religious heart of the Welsh people. All the most famous religious houses in Wales—Strata

Florida, Strata Marcella, Aberconway, Valle Crucis, Basingwerk, Cwm Hir, Margam, Whitland, Neath, Grace Dieu, Tintern, Cymer, Llantarnan—were Cistercian. For the most part the monks favoured the cause of national independence. They were not great scholars, nor did any particular sanctity pertain to their lives; but they were excellent farmers, their conduct was at least decent, and they occasionally wrote chronicles, like the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Brut*, which are invaluable to the historian of to-day.

The Friars, too, found a warm welcome in many parts of Wales. Cistercian monks were to be found in remote and lonely valleys, or on the edge of high and bleak moorlands; the Friars, on the other hand, worked in the towns amid the busiest haunts of men. Towns in Wales were few and insignificant, and consequently we do not find the Friars occupying the position of importance which they so soon acquired in England. Nevertheless, the Dominicans had houses at Bangor, Rhuddlan, Brecon, Haverfordwest, and Cardiff; while the Franciscans were to be found at Carmarthen, Cardiff, and Llan Vaes. In addition to the two principal Orders, there was a settlement of White Friars at Denbigh, and one of the Austin Friars at Newport.

The pre-eminently religious Wales of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with its itinerant preaching, its hymn-singing, and its mystical ecstasies, joins on quite naturally to the Wales of the Middle Ages. It is in the period between the reign of Elizabeth and that of George II, when that alien institution, the Church of England, had thrust itself upon the country, that we perceive a break.

What history Wales had from the Tudor period down is soon told so far as it concerns us here. With the best will in the world Henry VIII endeavoured to confer upon the Welsh people the priceless blessing of transforming them

into Englishmen! Laws were passed, affecting both secular and ecclesiastical affairs, attempting by threats and by bribes to induce Welshmen to forget their language and their ways. It was all of no avail. The Welsh squirearchy, to their eternal shame, allowed themselves to be bought; and in the nineteenth century it was rare to find one of the old families still using the mother-tongue as a matter of course. But with the middle and the lower classes the Anglicizing policy failed almost completely. The critical period was the seventeenth century, when Wales, for the most part, supported the Royalist cause in the Civil War. Before the close of the century, however, the tide had definitely turned, and there was a tremendous resurgence of national sentiment. In the eighteenth century the form which this sentiment took was mainly religious, with the result that three out of every four of the inhabitants left the Anglican Church and formed Welsh Nonconformist Churches. In the succeeding period the revival was more literary, educational, and political. More books came to be written in Welsh, the Welsh language began to be scientifically taught in all schools, while men like Henry Richard, Tom Ellis, Samuel Evans, and David Lloyd George were returned to Parliament to plead the cause of Wales.

Never has Welsh so flourished as a literary language as at the present day. About a score of weekly Welsh papers are published in Wales, some eighteen monthlies, and half a dozen quarterlies; in addition to which Liverpool has its own Welsh weekly, the United States one, and Patagonia one. The output of Welsh books is not very large when measured by the standards of some countries, but it cannot be estimated at much under a hundred in the course of every year, and the quality of those that are published is almost uniformly excellent. As every Welshman can read

English, he is content to have his fiction in that tongue; Welsh books are almost exclusively poetry, or of a serious and scholarly nature. And Welsh is not only widely read, but also widely spoken. In no sense is it a dead literary language. In North Wales, and in at least two counties in the South, it is still the language of the home, of the playground, and of public worship. In some counties it is a compulsory subject in every school. That Welsh is a patois spoken by a few fishermen and lodging-house keepers is a delusion which only the most ignorant foreigner could cherish. On the contrary, it is an ancient and highly developed language, fully capable of expressing not only the finest thoughts of the poet but also the most subtle argument of the philosopher and theologian.

CHAPTER II

THE APPROACH TO WALES

MEASURED from north to south and from east to west, Wales is a small country; but it would be a mistake to infer from that fact that it can be seen easily and with a small expenditure of time. Some small countries (Belgium, for example) can be easily seen in three weeks; for nine-tenths of it, from the Wayfarer's point of view, consists of half a dozen cities, in close proximity and linked together by a network of excellent railway-lines. As for the rest, a trip on the Meuse, with a couple of days' good hard walking in the Ardennes, would serve to provide a reliable and sufficient impression of it. But with Wales it is not so, though the omnipresence of the motor-bus has altered things considerably of late. It is very badly served by railways. The north coast from Chester to Caernarvon is easily reached by the L.M.S. Equally simple is the task of reaching the extreme south, from Chepstow to Fishguard by Great Western. But the places to which one is thus so easily carried are, for the most part, only starting-points for really seeing Wales. As for the rest, from Shrewsbury the Great Western has two lines which run through the heart of the country to the shores of Cardigan Bay, the one passing through Welshpool, Newtown, and Machynlleth, with its terminus at Aberystwyth; the other passing through Llangollen, Corwen, Bala, and Dolgelley to Barmouth, afterwards following the coast by Harlech and

Criccieth to Pwllheli. Then there are a few very slow and very inefficient cross-country lines, which everybody will avoid so far as possible. It must, however, be realized at the start that Wales simply cannot be seen by train. A great deal of it can be seen by motor-car. But the very best which the land has to offer can only be enjoyed by the pedestrian. Almost as much as Switzerland is Wales the country of the walker. The sensible traveller will (if he does not own a car) take a seat in one of the excellent express trains at Paddington, or Snow Hill, or Lime Street, and travel in comfort to the place of his choice—Cardiff, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Wrexham, or Chester. After that, unless his temper is proof against the annoyance of crawling trains, with hours spent at tiny wayside stations, and the further annoyance in the holiday seasons of gross overcrowding, our Wayfarer will be wise to betake himself to one of the innumerable motor-buses which now ply on almost every road throughout the Principality. These buses are very comfortable, they are practically always punctual, there is no overcrowding, and they afford infinitely better opportunities for seeing the life of the countryside than do the best of trains.

Where shall we start our journey? To that important question every man of experience will doubtless have his own answer to give. There is something to be said for starting in the extreme south, seeing the busy mining centres, and then following one of the river valleys to the great mountains of the middle and north. But then a good case could also be made for starting at Chester, and acquainting one's self first with the truly beautiful shores of Caernarvon Bay, with Anglesey lying like a well-cultivated farm to the west, and the mighty peaks of Snowdonia almost overhanging the road to the east. Yes, both these are good

gateways; but in my opinion, however, one great disadvantage attends them, and that is that they fail to bring you at once face to face with Welsh Wales. The importance of that may not strike one at a glance; but a moment's reflection will, I am sure, convince our Wayfarer of it. What the Wayfarer wants is to see Wales for what it really is—a foreign land. If he goes first to parts of the country which are not in the least foreign, he will ever after fail to associate foreigners with Wales in his heart of hearts. First impressions are not things to trifle with; for to modify them may prove an awkward operation. Now physically the man who looks at Snowdon from Llandudno is in Wales; spiritually he is no more in Wales than he would be if he were looking at Snowdon through a giant telescope from the tower at Blackpool. What I am urging is the importance of catching one's first glimpse of Snowdon, as it were, through a Welsh medium; for surely it does make all the difference in the world to one's emotions whether we are gazing at that beautiful peak to an accompaniment of Cockneyisms and Midlandisms, or to the accompaniment of the rich 'ch's' and 'll's' of the native people.

Putting myself in the position of the man about to visit Wales for the first time, I have no hesitation in recommending the route which begins at Ruabon and then proceeds up the valley of the Dee. A railway journey of just over three hours from Paddington, or of just over one hour from Liverpool, will bring the traveller to the little junction of Ruabon. If he should have come from the north, he will have passed through Wrexham, one of the busiest of the little towns of North Wales. Like nearly all Welsh towns, it is extremely ugly, with narrow, irregular streets and the most commonplace buildings. The Parish Church, however, is rather fine. It is built in the Perpendicular style, dating

mostly from the latter half of the fifteenth century. The tower is very imposing, for it is a hundred and thirty-five feet in height, and its four crowning turrets give it a graceful appearance. In the north aisle is an interesting monument to Mary Myddleton, a member of one of the great Border families, and a painting of David which has been ascribed (wrongly in all probability) to Rubens. Bishop Heber's father-in-law was Vicar of Wrexham in the early years of last century. In 1809 the famous poet-Bishop was staying with him at the Vicarage, and it was during this stay that he composed his well-known hymn, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains", for use at a missionary service to be held in the church.

Wrexham is one of the places regularly visited by American visitors to our shores; for Elihu Yale, founder of Yale University, lies buried in its churchyard. It is said that it was he who presented the painting of David to the church. Alumni of the famous American University have not been neglectful of the fame of their founder, for on the occasion of his bicentenary, in 1901, they restored the north porch of the church and erected a tablet to his memory. Elihu Yale was not born at Wrexham, but in the family home, Bryn Eglwys, some fifteen miles away.

Another native of Wrexham, more infamous than famous, was Judge Jeffreys. He was born at Aston Park, a mile to the north of the town. Serious efforts have been made of late to whiten the reputation of this wicked man. It is alleged that Whig historians have deliberately set about to vilify his name. Most people, however, remain unconvinced by this apologia. Whitewash is a commodity that modern historians appear to have an abundance of; but their stock is hardly sufficient to paint the Bloody Assize. When full allowance is made for the coarseness of

the age, nothing can disguise the revolting brutality of the Judge's reported utterances.

Although situated right on the English border, in the midst of alien influences, Wrexham has remained largely a Welsh town. At one time it was a celebrated educational centre, the rendezvous of Puritans and Roundheads. To-day it owns one of the best of Welsh publishing firms. A continuous stream of Welsh books—poetry, essays, plays, and above all theology—flows from the printing-press of Hughes & Son. Four years ago this enterprising and patriotic firm published a Welsh Bible Dictionary, much on the lines of the well-known English Bible Dictionary of Hastings. It is in two fat volumes, each of seven hundred pages of closely printed double columns. All the leading Welsh theological scholars of our day collaborated in its production. Its position is distinctly Modernist; and it is interesting to observe that the attitude of all these men, drawn from every branch of the Christian Protestant Churches, towards the leading problems of the Faith is practically identical, —in itself a sufficient condemnation of the sectarian differences which are still kept alive artificially in all the towns and villages of Wales.

However brief the traveller's visit to Wrexham, he will probably need refreshment, and so will look round for the most attractive hotel. As in practically all the small country towns of Wales, there is but little choice. At Wrexham the Wynnstay Arms seems inevitable, not because of any special merit possessed by that house, but because of the absence of all serious rivals. Why is it, I wonder, that all the smaller hotels in England and Wales are such poor places compared with the corresponding class in many countries abroad? They are dingy, heavily and unartistically furnished, and not always clean. The food is often preten-

tious, but seldom really appetizing. In the last half of the nineteenth century, when railways had caused so many wayside hostelries to become half-derelict, there was some excuse for them: travellers were few and far between, and it would be unreasonable to expect well-made beds and attractive dinners to be always ready at a moment's notice for guests who arrived casually and at long intervals. But to-day the motor-car has restored, and even improved upon, the conditions which prevailed in the good old days of the coach, with the result that the majority of hotels have again the opportunity of attracting a fairly steady stream of custom. However, so long as the provision made is of the quality which one expects to find in second-class hotels in third-class European countries, while charges are on a level with those prevailing at first-class hotels in Switzerland or Germany, their owners will, no doubt, have to be content with the 'poor seasons' about which they so constantly complain!

The most interesting thing about the Wynnstay Arms at Wrexham is its name, for it serves to introduce us to the Williams-Wynn family, great territorial magnates who, before the rising of the democratic tide in the nineteenth century, governed their numerous tenantry in North Wales almost with the power of princes. They do not belong to one of the old mediæval stocks, but to the new aristocracy which sprang up in Wales, as it did in England, after the Wars of the Roses. The principal seat of the family is Wynnstay, a magnificent mansion close to Ruabon. Let not the traveller bother to go thither unless he has business to transact or is a friend of the family; for, except to the park (and that only by special permission), strangers are not admitted. Candidly, I do not feel in the least disposed to blame people who refuse to convert their houses and

gardens into public museums, picture galleries, and parks. For my own part I should hate to have strangers walking about my little home, peering at my pictures and books, and criticizing (ignorantly, of course!) my taste in carpets and curtains; and if I lived in a palace I doubt whether I should feel at all otherwise about the matter. Of course, circumstances alter cases; and where a man possesses several houses, each vastly too big for his own needs, he may not unreasonably be expected to gratify the curiosity of the public, on occasions at least. The lucky visitor who secures admission to Wynnstay will see there the usual type of country house, spacious, and well-furnished, but with no special characteristics. Its most valuable contents are some family portraits by Van Dyck, Kneller, and Reynolds.

Other interesting excursions may be made from Wrexham. It is but eleven miles to Hawarden, and the journey thither may be made comfortably by either bus or train. Be a man's politics what they may, he cannot fail to be interested in the almost lifelong home of the great scholar-statesman who bestrode British history like a colossus for fifty years. The famous library, the little church in which Gladstone was so faithful a worshipper, and the glorious park with the trees which the strenuous old man used so to delight in hewing down, are all well worth a visit. In no part of Britain was Gladstone held in higher esteem than in Wales. Indeed, the feeling of this ultra-Protestant people for the ardent High Churchman bordered on idolatry.

From Wrexham we may also pay a visit to Bangor Iscoed, a place not to be confused with the better known Bangor on the shores of the Menai Straits. In olden days 'Bangor' meant Bangor Iscoed. The little village of Bangor-on-Dee stands, as its name implies, on the bank of the Dee, and a picturesque bridge there spans the river. It

is said that the Roman town of Bovium once stood there. At all events there was established one of the first monasteries in Britain. Bangor Iscoed was celebrated throughout the whole Christian world. There Pelagius, the famous heretic and bitter opponent of St. Augustine, lived in the fourth century, though he was not a monk. Tragedy overtook the monastery in the year 607. The Britons of Wales just then were contesting every inch of ground against the invading English. One of those heathen English, King Ethelfrith of Northumbria, advanced against Bangor, and there fought a great battle. While the battle was in progress, the monks of the neighbouring monastery, numbering more than twelve hundred, stood by praying for the success of the Christian army and for the defeat of the pagans. Ethelfrith must have been a clear-headed fellow, for he saw at once that this sort of prayer must be considered contraband of war, a sort of conduct that *ipso facto* ranged the monks with combatants. 'Those who pray against me fight against me', he shouted; and thereupon gave orders for the whole twelve hundred monks to be slain, and the monastery razed to the ground. Only a few of them escaped the massacre; and they betook themselves, together with their piety and their culture, to the remote island of Bardsey, where they would be perfectly safe from all possibility of English persecution. The conscientious Wayfarer, wishing to see every side of the national life, will, I dare say, pay a visit to the busy colliery area which lies like a belt about Wrexham. Rhos, Brymbo, Coedpoeth, Gwersyllt are a few among the many mining villages within a ten-mile radius. Here mining operations are on a much smaller scale than those of the coal valleys of South Wales; and although there is an abundance of unsightly heaps, chimneys, and cottages, there is not the impression

of universal squalor and desolation which one gets in mile after mile of the Rhondda. The colliers here are more purely Welsh than they are in the southern mining districts. Most of them speak Welsh, their politics are of a milder shade of red, and they hold much more tightly to the ancient cultural and religious standards of the nation. There could be no finer treat for the Wayfarer than to hear an improvised choir of Rhos miners, assisted by their wives and daughters, singing the old hymns and songs of Wales.

CHAPTER III

THE DEE

SO far we have merely been nibbling at the fringes of Wales, and it is high time for us to push on into the country itself. Our best possible guide will be the Dee, one of the few rivers as distinct from mountain streams in North Wales. Kingsley, De Quincey, and others have made famous the wide and treacherous sands of its estuary. Above its tidal point it flows majestically through flat country as far as Ruabon. There, all of a sudden, its character is changed. Thenceforward right up to its source in the blank Merionethshire mountains it rushes along, tumbling over rocks, cutting its way through deep ravines, lashing itself into foam as it falls from ledge to ledge, mirroring in its occasional calm reaches the ferns and the heather which clothe its steep banks.

From Ruabon to Llangollen is but a fifteen minutes' run by train; and once there you have definitely left England behind you. Few railway-stations in the world can be so magnificently situated as that of Llangollen. One thinks of Cochem, of Triberg, of Agaz, of Kandersteg, of Stresa, and other such places where we step from the train immediately into scenes of matchless beauty, and even then admits that perhaps the palm ought to be awarded to Llangollen. By its side, literally within a stone's-throw, rushes the broad river, here forming a series of lovely falls. On its opposite bank stand the grey houses of the old town, their upper

stories almost overhanging the turbid waters. Joining the town with the bank on which the station stands is a magnificent stone bridge, said to be the oldest of its kind in Wales. It stands to-day, as it has done for hundreds of years, a convincing demonstration of the possibility of uniting beauty and efficiency, grace and strength. The little town stands among the meadows, almost totally surrounded by mountains. In themselves these are not very high: none of them exceeds two thousand feet. But so precipitous are they, and so skilfully has Nature grouped them, that they convey the impression of far greater altitude. The scene, particularly in autumn, is of unsurpassable beauty. All the slopes of the mountains are covered with heather and bracken; while the valleys between them are densely wooded with fir, birch, and oak. At the north end of the amphitheatre of hills is a narrow and wholly concealed passage, through which the Dee enters. At the southern end is another and wider passage, through which it proceeds on its way in more leisurely fashion towards the plains of England. Llangollen is a place eminently suited for a long stay. A week is the very minimum within which the surrounding places of interest and beauty can be seen; while in the course of a month, given good weather, there will be no need to pass a single tedious day. Accommodation there is good, if expensive. The town itself is quite a pleasant place, quiet and clean, like all Welsh towns that are not too often invaded by excursionists. Unfortunately many Midland and Lancashire charabanc companies are now discovering the charm of Llangollen, and I have seen the lovely banks of its canal and the lower slopes of Dinas Bran simply black with trippers. The remedy, of course, is to go there in early May, or October, for at both those seasons the valley is at its best, and there are no invading

THE SWALLOW FALLS, BETTWS-Y-COED

LLANGOLLEN AND DINAS BRAN

charabancs except during the Easter week-end and Whitweek. Except for the bridge across the Dee there is not a single building possessing intrinsic interest; nevertheless, the ragged outline of the one and only street presents a pleasing whole to the critical and discerning eye.

As I have already remarked, there is excellent accommodation to be had; and this ranges from the ancient and opulent Hand Hotel down to unpretentious lodgings. It would be humbug to pretend that Welsh landladies are any better than their sisters of Cornwall or Sussex; but I do protest against the charge that they are worse. After all, is not the class of human beings which lives upon the profits derived from catering for the bodily needs of holiday-makers the same all the world over? Here and there may still be found an old inn at which you are treated like a valued friend. I myself have lighted upon such places. One of them was in the heart of the Corsican mountains. There I paid the modest sum of five shillings for a most comfortable bedroom and first-rate breakfast, lunch, and dinner (including wine); and when the moment for discharging the account arrived, the padrone firmly refused to accept a penny for the little extras which I had ordered in the form of coffee, picture post cards, and two great slabs of chocolate. No doubt there were many such places in the olden days; but the coming of tourists in large numbers seems to have corrupted the morals, and spoilt the manners, of all those dependent upon them. Wales is no worse than other popular playgrounds; but it is only fair to warn the intending Wayfarer that neither Welsh shops, nor hotels, nor lodging-houses are run on philanthropic lines! Charges are generally stiff, especially in places with a reputation; but one's discontent, of course, is in proportion to the quality of what is received in

exchange. No words can be too severe to condemn the rapacious robbers who, sometimes in the guise of greengrocers, sometimes in that of hotel managers, plunder the visitors at the more popular seaside and inland resorts of the Principality. In the smaller places, and especially in the country towns and real mountain resorts, things are much more satisfactory. The danger is that the coming of the motorist may, sooner or later, corrupt these likewise. I know of a hotel in the English Lakes (and it is one of the best in that region of excellent hotels) at which a man who arrives in a luxurious car is still given a frigid reception, warmth of welcome being reserved for him who comes on foot with rucksack on his shoulders. The sagacious landlord of that inn prefers quality to opulence in his guests; and has discovered, what is perfectly true, that whereas the motorist to-day may be any sort of man, the true pedestrian is likely to be of the right brand of aristocracy. I can't say this about any Welsh inn that I know of; but I can say very nearly as much about the two delightful mountain inns of Pen-y-Gwryd and Pen-y-Pass, places of which I intend to discourse at some length later on.

Let us now imagine ourselves comfortably settled in the house of our choice at Llangollen, with at least a week before us for exploring the neighbourhood. If the time of year be August we may expect much rain; but if we have been sensible enough to come in May, June, late September, or October, we may quite reasonably expect unbroken sunshine.

Our survey of the little town completed, we look around at the beckoning circle of mountains, and immediately our attention is arrested by a conical hill standing in the foreground on the opposite side of the river, and rising to a height of some eight hundred feet. On its summit we

descry some grey ruins, which quite obviously are those of an old castle. Now I do not know what other Wayfarers may feel about the matter, but to me few things are so fascinating as ancient castles perched upon the summit of hills with a background of great mountains behind them. Harlech and Berncastel, Malcesine and Salzburg, Bellinzona and Hohenschwangau, Drachenfels and Dürrenstein, and many more have irresistibly attracted me. I have raced up the narrow footpaths to their gates, and day-dreamed for hours among their ruins. This old castle by Llangollen is strikingly reminiscent of many of those which crown the slopes which rise so steeply out of the Rhine and the Moselle; only that the scenery is far finer than anything that even delightful Rhineland has to show. Let us devote a morning to climbing the hill and looking more closely at what remains of the fortress. Not only is the view which unfolds itself to us from the summit as fine as that which we behold from Ehrenfels or Rheinfels, but the castle itself is no whit behind in historic and romantic interest. Its name is Dinas Bran, which being interpreted means the City of Bran, and not 'City of Crows' as some guide-books would have it (*Bran* is Welsh for crow). Bran was a Welsh king who reigned in the sixth century. Tradition declares that he built a fort on this incomparable site. It was, however, in the Middle Ages, when Wales was at deadly war with Norman barons, that Dinas Bran became famous. Obviously its owner holds the key to the valley of the Dee, and consequently one of the principal gateways into the heart of Wales. During those centuries of strife this impregnable castle was the possession of the Prince of Powys, the middle kingdom which lay between Gwynedd in the north and Deheubarth in the south. When Powys ceased to exist as a principality Dinas Bran passed into the hands of

the Trevor family. A Trevor (a bishop, by the way) built the bridge at Llangollen; and for many a long year they were lords of Chirk. Romance, too, has been busy, as we would expect, with Dinas Bran. There lived there at the close of the Middle Ages, Myfanwy, a daughter of the house of Trevor, a maiden renowned throughout the whole land for her incomparable beauty and charm. Welsh poetry, beginning with Guten Owen, a Llangollen contemporary of hers, who was deeply smitten with love for her, and ending with Ceiriog, the greatest Welsh lyrical poet of the nineteenth century, is full of her fame. Ceiriog cries in ecstasy: 'Would I were a gust of wind blowing through the garden of Dinas Bran, whispering my secret in thine ear, making ringlets of thine hair.' The old castle has been a ruin for upwards of four centuries. Leland found it in that condition when he saw it in the reign of Henry VIII, and describes it as 'never bygge thing, but sette al for strenht as in a place half inaccessible for enemies.' Fortunately the steepness of the climb still serves to keep at bay the modern enemy in the form of the careless tripper. On the summit, seated on a mouldering bit of the old walls, he who would commune with Nature almost at her finest, and allow his fancy to travel back down the ages, may do so at most times without interruption.

Another expedition from Llangollen which should on no account be missed is that to the old abbey of Llangwestle, or Valle Crucis as it is more commonly called. The road thither is delightful: it is only about two miles long, there is no climbing, and it would be difficult to imagine a larger assortment of natural beauty packed into so narrow a compass. For some distance we walk up the left bank of the Dee, having also as our companion the canal, which on another occasion shall carry us to Chirk. Few town

VALLE CRUCIS ABBEY

dwellers will, I fear, be thrilled by the prospect of walking by the side of a canal; for such necessary and useful things are commonly associated with muddy water, dirty tow-paths, scattered refuse, and rows of squalid brick cottages. Let me then hasten to explain that the canal of Llangollen is not in the least like that! On the contrary, its waters are generally clear, the tow-path is as trim as the walks in a well-kept spa garden, and its banks are lined with larch and chestnut trees, and covered with an inexhaustible profusion of wild flowers. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that a person brought up to love the sluggish streams of our midland and eastern counties might actually prefer this wonderful canal to the foaming river which dashes over its rocky bed only a few yards away. All would have to admit, I think, that if the Dee were not there at all the Vale of Llangollen, with its canal, would still be one of the most unforgettable bits of scenery in the world.

After walking about two miles from Llangollen a narrow valley opens on the right. Hardly so majestic as the main valley which we have just quitted, this glen is no less delightful, for its loneliness makes up for what is otherwise lacking. Not a quarter of a mile farther on we come upon the exquisite ruins of the old monastic house. What an eye for a site those old monks had! Windy hill-tops and distant prospects they evidently did not care for; those things were left for the men of war who erected castles: but for tender beauty of landscape, for a perfect picture of verdant meadow, rippling stream, and clustering woods, you could always safely reckon upon them. What could surpass the natural setting of Fountains, or Bolton, or Tintern, or Melrose, or Glastonbury? To none of these is the site of Valle Crucis in any way inferior. It is the most finely situated abbey in North Wales; and it is also the best preserved.

Valle Crucis was, like the majority of Welsh monastic foundations, the property of the Cistercians. Its founder was Madoc ap Gruffydd Maelor, who was Prince of Powys about the year 1200. It was never wealthy in the English sense: none of the Welsh abbeys were. When it came to be dissolved by Henry VIII in 1535 its revenues were estimated at £188 8s. per annum; and they were assigned to Edward Wotton. I will not repeat the guide-book architectural catalogue; but merely say that enough of the old walls, and of the exquisite windows, remains to make the ruins of Valle Crucis in themselves, quite apart from their surroundings, truly beautiful.

Most travellers when they have seen Valle Crucis turn back and retrace their steps to Llangollen; but to do so is a great mistake. The road past the abbey winds on, and there is a good deal more ahead that rewards attention. Only a quarter of a mile farther on, erect in a field to the right of the road, stands a stone cross known as Eliseg's Pillar. Antiquarians have declared that this is the oldest post-Roman monument in our island. It is supposed to have been erected in the ninth century by Concenn-ap-Cadell-ap-Brochmael, in memory of an ancestor of his who was killed in the great massacre of Bangor Iscoed.

Continuing along the same road we come suddenly to a perfectly exquisite specimen of Tudor domestic architecture, one of those white and black timbered houses which are comparatively numerous in Cheshire and Salop. It is now called Plas Eglwyseg. But beautiful though the present house is, it is because of its romantic history that we must not fail to visit it. The inscription over the door tells us (and we have no reason to doubt its veracity) that the manor was inherited by the princes of Powys in 1073 from Bleddyn, King of Gwynedd. The house contains much of

historic and artistic interest, in particular an excellent portrait of Oliver Cromwell by Lely. The presence of this portrait in so remote a spot is accounted for by the fact that Plas Eglwyseg, in the middle years of the seventeenth century, belonged to the famous Colonel John Jones, Cromwell's brother-in-law. The gallant Colonel was one of those who signed the death-warrant of King Charles, a deed which he expiated later on by dying on the scaffold. In the course of our wanderings we shall visit another of his homes, the lovely farm of Maes-y-Garnedd, hidden far away in the very heart of the rugged Merionethshire mountains.

But the great fame of Plas Eglwyseg (then called Hafod) comes from its having been the scene of the most dare-devil exploit of the lawless twelfth century. The story is as follows. Rhys ap Tudor, Prince of South Wales, had a beautiful daughter called Nest. When she was on a visit to the court of King Henry I, that learned monarch was smitten by her charms, and sometime after she bore him a son. Henry married her to one of his favourite nobles, Gerald de Windsor, Earl of Pembroke. There lived at that time at Plas Eglwyseg young Prince Owen, who ruled Powys on behalf of his father Cadwgan. Like most other people of the day, he had heard much about the beauty of Nest, and consequently determined that he would see her for himself. He came, he saw, and he was conquered. Burning with his unlawful passion, and utterly reckless of consequences, he determined that Nest should be his. Collecting a band of daring young fellows like himself, he broke into the castle of Pembroke in the middle of the night. The unworthy husband escaped down a drain, allowing his beautiful wife and his two children, to fall into the hands of the Welshmen. Owen then bore away his prize in triumph, and for some time kept her in his lonely

retreat at Plas Eglwyseg. Naturally the faint-hearted lord of Pembroke was furious; and so was King Henry. All the Norman barons of the Marches were invited to fall upon Cadwgan, who was in no way responsible for his son's escapade. He was stripped of his possessions; and eventually the guilty Owen was obliged to flee to Ireland. But even there he was not to escape retribution. He was encountered in battle, and slain by the hand of the husband he had so infamously wronged. It is satisfactory to know that Nest and the children finally returned in safety to their home at Pembroke. But what she thought about these transactions, and which of her many rival lovers had her heart, we do not know!

The Wayfarer who has spent two strenuous days in exploring Dinas Bran and the Valley of the Cross will probably feel that he deserves a little rest. Indeed, one of the secrets of a perfect holiday is the judicious interspersing of days of comparative leisure among others of a more active kind. Llangollen is admirably adapted for this kind of half-speed holiday. No reasonable being ought to object to spending a day in complete idleness amid such surroundings. If you are fortunate enough to be able to read Welsh, put a volume of Ceiriog in your pocket; or if you have never learnt the old language of Wales, Wordsworth will do at a pinch, for he visited these parts, and gave to the world some curiously inaccurate descriptions of what he beheld. Then with some sandwiches, and a thermos flask, stroll as far as inclination leads you up the river, select a comfortable seat among the ferns at the water's brink, and then bask in the sunshine till the shadows begin to gather round. One day so spent will fill you with more of the spirit of North Wales than would a month of hurried motoring from one beauty-spot to another.

THE PILLAR OF ELISEG

It is not every one, however, who has sufficient internal resource for such *dolce far niente*; and perhaps time presses, and you are consumed with a passion for *seeing* as much as possible. Well then, if you would see, and at the same time delightfully rest, let me advise you to take your place in one of the excellent passenger barges, drawn by horses, which ply up and down the canal. Having booked your passage to Chirk, recline at ease while you are slowly drawn for eight lovely miles through the rippling water and the stupendous aqueduct which carries the canal right across the Dee valley.

In itself the village of Chirk is of no particular interest; but there are few places in which it is so easy to discover that Wales is a foreign land. Walk a mile to the east and you are in the typical surroundings of rural England—flat or undulating fields, giant timber, brick farmsteads surrounded by fruit-trees, and, of course, the sound of the English language. Then walk a mile to the west and you will find yourself in a district typically Welsh—a narrow valley rising rapidly with towering hills on each side, a brawling stream rushing down its floor, grey stone houses, and Welsh spoken everywhere. This valley of Ceirig is one of the most beautiful in the whole country, and great was the consternation a short time ago when it was proposed to turn it into a great reservoir. From it the greatest of Welsh lyric poets, John Ceiriog Hughes (always referred to simply as 'Ceiriog'), derived his name. This remarkable man earned his living by pursuing the prosaic calling of station-master. But such duties are never very exacting in small country places. Intervals between trains are long and frequent, and there must be ample time for him who has the true stuff of poetry within him to polish his rhymes and to put them upon paper. That Ceiriog was a really fine poet

admits of no doubt. Of epic power he possessed little or none; but no one has sung more sweetly of human love, of the mountain stream, of the corn harvest, of all the simple joys of rural life, and of the deep longing of the child of the mountains compelled by circumstances to live in towns. His songs, many of which have been set to music, have entered into the very fibre of the Welshman's heart; and he has come to occupy, among his countrymen, as unique a position as Burns occupies in Scotland.

John Ceiriog Hughes was born in the tiny hamlet of Llanarmon in 1832. After receiving an elementary education at a school close by, he went to Manchester, where he was apprenticed to a printer. This calling, however, does not seem to have appealed much to him, or was it that he disliked too intensely the prospect of spending his whole life in an English town? Be it as it may, he returned to Wales in 1865, to become stationmaster at Llanidloes. Subsequently he held the same post at Towyn, Trefeglwys, and Caersws, where, in 1887, he died. Throughout his life he wrote poetry, and we have, in all, about six hundred of his songs. I am one of those who hold that to read poetry in translation is almost quite useless, and that to read lyrical poetry is wholly so. Ceiriog is more like Burns or Heine than any other poet that I know; and how utterly useless it would be to try to translate either of those two immortals every reader who knows English and German would allow. Ceiriog's poetry has brought joy into thousands of human hearts. He has done even more than that. He lived through a period in which the Welsh language was fighting a grim battle for its very existence. On the one hand stood the scholars in all the panoply of their learning, writing a stiff classical Welsh which a public, whose education in their native

tongue had been scandalously neglected, could hardly understand. On the other hand was the man in the street, using increasingly a base patois consisting of a Welsh framework covered over with a hideous assortment of unassimilated English words and phrases. Ceiriog employed the simple speech of the people, and showed how it could be made, in the hands of a master, to serve every need of the human mind. It is not going too far to say that Ceiriog, and his younger contemporary the great prose writer, O. M. Edwards, between them saved the Welsh language, and placed it on that safe footing which, fortunately, it occupies to-day. A sound Welsh education is now imparted in practically every school in Wales; and now boys and girls of fifteen are well able to read and enjoy, not only the simple lyrics of Ceiriog, but the more classical compositions of the younger poets of our own day.

The thoughtful Wayfarer who may have brought with him to Chirk the wherewithal for spending a night or two away from his base camp may be so captivated by the scenes which greet him at the entrance of the Ceiriog valley that he will decide to explore its upper reaches before returning to Llangollen. If he should do so, no one could blame him, for there are few things better worth doing. He can, if he pleases, take the little train at Chirk and let it carry him to its terminus at Glyn Ceiriog, six miles up the valley. The railway company is obliging enough to provide Observation Cars on at least some of the trains, and if in a hurry this method of seeing the country can be recommended. But personally I always think that five miles on foot is better than fifty by rail. For my own part I should prefer to shoulder my rucksack, take a stout stick in my hand, and push on at a brisk pace along the excellent road up the valley. There are several villages, and other objects

of interest, on the way; and there is adequate, if plain, accommodation to be found at the numerous public-houses in the district.

Just over a mile from Chirk station we come to Chirk Castle, no ruin like Dinas Bran, or semi-ruin like Caernarvon, but an early fourteenth-century castle in perfect condition, and inhabited to-day as it has been for six hundred years. In the stormy days of the Civil War it was the property of the Myddleton family, and it fell to its lot to be besieged several times. The castle contains a bed slept in by Charles I, a pair of jackboots said to have been worn by Cromwell, and a superb cabinet, inlaid, with silver, and alleged to have cost £10,000, presented by Charles II to Sir Thomas Myddleton as a token of his gratitude, and, in all probability, in liquidation of the claims to compensation for losses incurred in the Royalist cause which the loyal old baronet might have presented!

We proceed on our way through Pontfaen, Castle Mill, Pontfadog, and Dolywern until the village of Glyn Ceiriog itself is reached. There we must certainly pause in order to see the Institute erected lately as a memorial to the poet of the valley. It stands in the village street, a substantial and artistic building. Within are some interesting paintings and manuscripts connected with Ceiriog. Close by are the Coed-y-Glyn granite quarries, immense caves which inevitably remind one of the famous Grottes de Han in the Ardennes. There are also some wonderful subterranean slate quarries, from which slates of first-rate quality have been extracted for upwards of four hundred years.

From Glyn Ceiriog it is easy for the pedestrian to return to Llangollen without having to go all the way back to Chirk. A road runs thither in almost a straight line over the intervening mountain, and its length is said to be only

three miles. But in the heart of Wild Wales it is always better to measure distance in terms of time as they do in Switzerland. What is the use of being told that the distance, say, from Lauterbrunnen to Wengen is two miles? Far more satisfactory is it to know that in order to reach that delectable Alpine village you will have to struggle and pant for two hours. And so when we say that the distance between Glyn Ceiriog and Llangollen is three miles, it should be added in common fairness that those miles consist of a terribly steep climb up one side of the ridge, a few yards of comparatively level road on the top, and a most precip tous descent on the other side. But no person who dislikes stiff climbs has any business to be in Wales at all: for him the Leamingtons and the Cheltenhams of the world have been created, and he had better stick to them! Anyone of ordinary soundness of limb and wind would enjoy this climb over the Berwyns, with its exhilarating air and its extensive prospects.

But before taking this road back to Llangollen we should be wise to pursue our way up the Ceiriog valley at least as far as Llanarmon. On the way, at Pont-y-Meibion, we pass the home of another famous Welsh poet, Huw Morris, an ardent Royalist, who lived from 1622 to 1709. Llanarmon is a neat little village, nestling at the foot of Mynydd Tarw, a spur of the Berwyn range, which rises to the respectable height of 2,230 feet. The climb to its summit is perfectly easy and safe, and no guide is needed. From Llanarmon the mountain lover may bag two other pretty considerable peaks—Moel Sych (2,713 feet) and Cader Fronwen (2,572 feet). The walker who does not fear rough roads may also push on to Pistyll Rhaiadr, a magnificent waterfall reputed to be the highest in Wales. And thereby hangs an amusing tale! One of the owners of Chirk commissioned a French

artist to paint for him a picture of the fall. When it was almost completed, the owner suggested to the painter that it would be greatly improved by the insertion of a few 'sheeps.' The Frenchman, having not much knowledge of English, and still less knowledge of English as it is sometimes spoken in Wales, took the picture away, and later returned with the added embellishment of several sailing ships uneasily perched amid the swirling and foaming cataracts! The picture hangs in Chirk Castle down to this day.

George Borrow was immensely impressed by Pistyll Rhaiadr, and the description of it contained in the seventieth chapter of *Wild Wales* would be hard to beat. Here it is: 'On the side of this hollow I sat down, and gazed down before me on either side. The water came spurting over a crag of perhaps two hundred feet in altitude between two hills, one south-east and the other nearly north. The southern hill is wooded from the top nearly down to where the cataract bursts forth; and so, but not so thickly, is the northern hill, which has a singular resemblance to a hog's back. Groves of firs are on the lower parts of the path; in front of a grove low down on the northern hill is a small slate house of a picturesque appearance. The water of the cataract, after reaching the bottom of the precipice, rushes in a narrow brook down the side in the direction of Llan Rhyadr. To the north-east, between the hog-backed hill and another strange-looking mountain, is a wild glen, from which comes a brook to swell the waters discharged by the Rhyadr. The south-west side of the hill is steep, and from a cleft of a hill in that quarter a slender stream rushing impetuously joins the brook of the Rhyadr, like the rill of the northern glen. The principal object of the whole is, of course, the Rhyadr. What shall I liken it to? I scarcely know, unless to an immense skeip of silk agitated and disturbed by

tempestuous blasts, or to the long tail of a grey courser at furious speed. Through the profusion of long silvery threads or hairs, or what looked such, I could here and there see the black sides of the crag down which the Rhyadr precipitated itself with something between a boom and a roar.'

I have allowed old Borrow to describe this fine waterfall in his own rough, but graphic, language. Henceforward I shall only barely mention the waterfalls of Wales when we happen to be in their vicinity. For, truth to tell, we have lost a good deal of the enthusiasm with which our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers regarded these things. They seem to belong to the transition period between the eighteenth century, with its formal gardens, grottoes, and artificial cascades, and the full-blown delight in the ruggedness of Nature which came in Alpine Club days. I confess quite frankly that when told by the well-meaning driver to get out and view even the great Lodore, or the Swallow, or even the Reichenbach, I feel a touch of annoyance; and it is only a healthy dislike of appearing eccentric or 'superior' that keeps me from flatly refusing to move!

We must now return to the Dee and rejoin those members of our party who, refusing to be seduced by the allurements of the valley of Ceiriog, returned to Llangollen in the way they had come, namely by barge.

I am not even attempting to describe every possible walk, or combination of walks, in this or any other district. These extra ones the Wayfarer can easily discover for himself. Indeed, I always think that the efficient German plan of placing countless direction-posts, so as to make such a thing as losing one's way utterly impossible, has a great deal to be said against it. In consequence of it you are robbed of what little chance of adventure is left in these civilized days when you walk in such charming regions as

the Schwarzwald, the Eifel, or the Harz. It would be a pity to map out so small a country as Wales to such an extent. No, let reasonable directions be given, so as to prevent the man who aims at getting to the top of Aran from unwittingly getting to the top of Cader Idris instead; but allow a reasonable margin of uncertainty. If you should happen to take the wrong path, and consequently find yourself, just as the evening shadows are gathering around, at Talyllyn when you fondly imagined that you were approaching Dolgelley, you will only look back with the greater pleasure to the expedition as you smoke your pipe by the fire during the winter evenings. And remember, there is always a chance that you may be immortalized at exceeding small cost by being the hero of one of those newspaper paragraphs so much sought after by enterprising Welsh journalists, and headed 'Englishman Lost on Cader. Narrow Escape!'

But I must not forget to advise our Wayfarer to have a look at Plas Newydd before leaving Llangollen, if only for the reason that he will inevitably see it depicted in a Great Western carriage in the course of his journeyings, and be asked by the man who knows his Blue Guide well whether he has been to it. Fortunately, although the associations are trivial enough, and might well be forgotten, this old house is so perfect an example of 'black and white' architecture that it does reward a visit. The place became famous when Lady Eleanor Butler and the Hon. Sarah Ponsonby (the 'Ladies of Llangollen') settled there in 1779, withdrawing from the garish delights of the Irish capital, and living in seclusion for the remainder of their lives. They were devoted to each other, and had sworn a sort of new-fashioned nun's vow, by which they dedicated themselves to 'friendship, celibacy, and the knitting of

blue stockings'. The love of solitude, however, was not so complete as to prevent their allowing themselves to be objects of curiosity to passing travellers—always provided that those travellers were themselves people of distinction. Standing as their house did in close proximity to the Holyhead road, along which all traffic between London and Ireland passed, a pretty constant stream of visitors must have descended upon them. We know at least that the great Duke of Wellington, De Quincey, Walter Scott, Wordsworth, and Madame de Genlis stopped to pay homage to them. Wordsworth was devoid not only of humour, but of tact. He wrote a sonnet in which he referred to Plas Newydd as a 'low-browed cot', thereby mightily offending its fair inmates!

We are now probably satisfied that we have seen all the sights of Llangollen; and we have further learned, I trust, that the 'sight' which really matters in Wales is the country as a whole. So magnificent is Nature's handiwork, so profusely has she scattered beauty on every hand, that we have scarcely the patience to look at church, abbey, castle, or manor house. All the same, there are certain works of man's hands that we are beginning, thus early in our wanderings, to associate inseparably with the landscapes of Wales—grey stone farm buildings with moss-green roofs, one-span stone bridges mantled with ivy, white-washed wayside cottages, great wheels turned by cataracts which come dashing down steep hill-sides, quaint little village churches, and plain oblong chapels almost unsurpassable in ugliness, yet of quite inestimable importance in the life of the Welsh people. Throughout our peregrinations in North Wales, and for the most part in the South as well, we shall have these objects always with us.

CHAPTER IV

THE MERIONETH HIGHLANDS

FROM Llangollen the Wayfarer naturally pushes on towards the heart of the Welsh Highlands, following the River Dee to its source. There are many delightful villages on, or near, its banks between Llangollen and Corwen—Berwyn, with its picturesque inn so dear to the heart of angler and painter; Carrog and Glyndyfrdwy, with their memories of the last independent Prince of Wales, Owen Glyndwr. All this portion of the valley is saturated with history and legend pertaining to his name. At Glyndyfrdwy stood one of his two mansions; at Carrog he was wont to imprison his enemies; at Corwen tradition has it that his unknown grave is to be found. This, as the reader is thankful perhaps to remember, is in no sense a history of Wales, else I should have to expatiate at some length upon the marvellous deeds, and the fine ideals, of Owen Glyndwr. No other man, save perhaps Mr. Lloyd George, has ever impressed himself so deeply upon the heart of Wales as a whole. When I was a boy English text-books used to refer to Glyndwr as 'a cunning and savage robber-knight'. Cunning he no doubt was; savage too he may have been, though certainly not more so than his English foes; but a robber-knight he certainly was not. He was a great patriot, a cultured gentleman, a consummate leader, and a singularly far-sighted statesman. Had he been born to a throne, there can be little doubt

that he would have proved to be one of the outstanding figures of the Middle Ages.

At all these little Dee-side villages the reasonable Wayfarer can easily find good accommodation; and if his taste be for beautiful scenery, good air, perfect quiet, and long walks, including stiff climbs, there is no reason why he should not select one of them for a prolonged stay. I have known people who go year after year to Glyndyfrdwy and never tire of its charms. Even in winter, given ordinary luck, it is possible to spend a delightful holiday in the Dee valley. Of course the days are short, and there are no diversions for the long evenings save those the visitor is able to bring with him. Many of us, however, would hold that a walk lasting from nine in the morning till four in the afternoon is quite sufficient, and that there could be no more agreeable finish to such a day than a blazing fire, a comfortable chair, and four uninterrupted hours with Thackeray, Balzac, or whoever our favourite novelist may happen to be.

Much nonsense has been written about 'long and severe Welsh winters'—of course by persons who have only visited the country in summer! The fact is that Welsh winters are a good deal shorter, and much less severe, than those experienced in the majority of English counties. They come late, seldom before the middle of December; and at the beginning of February spring has definitely arrived. Particularly is it so on the favoured shores of Cardigan Bay. At Aberdovey, Barmouth, Harlech, Criccieth, or Pwllheli an overcoat is rarely needed save when it is raining. October is a splendid month at all those places; and there is no reason why picnicking and bathing should not be indulged in right to its close. Of course it rains a good deal in Wales, as it does in every mountainous

region; but that is not in winter. One of the wettest months is August; and as that is the time when the majority of misguided folk visit the Principality, the legend is spread abroad that Wales is a country, something like Ireland or Skye, where it seldom does anything except rain! Let the traveller come in May, June, September, or October, and I warrant him that he will have three days out of every four perfectly fine. Let him come in November, December, or March, and he will be unlucky if on at least half the days he does not enjoy five or six hours of brilliant sunshine. He who chooses to fly in the face of good advice and to come in August must be left to his fate—a fate which generally consists of a good soaking at least twice a day! For several successive years now I have been at Barmouth during the first week in January, and all these visits are associated in my memory with cloudless blue skies, equally blue seas, snow-capped mountains of dazzling whiteness, exhilarating air which made the stiffest climbing a pleasure, and sunshine so warm that one could comfortably sit on a stone, without an overcoat, and linger over one's packed lunch. If only all this could be realized by holiday-makers, there would be an end to the appalling crowds almost fighting for accommodation at the popular resorts during August, providing the born profiteer in those places with his ready excuse that prices must be high because the 'season is so short'. Many, of course, have the date of their holiday fixed for them by others; but let every person who has freedom of choice at least avoid the six weeks between the middle of July and the end of August.

In a hurried journey through Wales such as our journey is obliged to be, the first place after Llangollen that we can hope to stay at for more than a few hours is Corwen.

There are various ways of getting thither, all of them beautiful. Even if we go by train we shall see a good deal of the glory of what is perhaps the finest of Welsh valleys; but for my own part I should prefer to go by road.

At Corwen the valley has widened out, and there are rich pastures spreading on either side of the Dee. The next few miles, stretching as far as Bala Lake, though beautiful judged by ordinary standards, are apt to prove disappointing after the scenes which we have just passed through. Nor can Corwen itself vie in picturesqueness with Llangollen. Shall I be greatly daring, and say outright that it is ugly? As usual, he who arrives by train sees the worst aspect of the place, which here consists of an unspeakably hideous iron pavilion, useful no doubt for holding the thousands of people who annually flock thither to the Eisteddfod, but otherwise utterly lacking any justification for its existence, the backs of squalid terraces, some unsightly sheep- and cattle-pens, and a couple of most unlovely chapels. The little grey town, of some two thousand inhabitants, is huddled together right under a hill, which effectually prevents it from receiving a ray of sunshine at any period of the year. If you chaff the inhabitants about their lack of wisdom in selecting this cheerless site when there were so many eligible ones just across the river, they will tell you that there was supernatural intervention in the matter, and that their forefathers who built the town long centuries ago were really allowed no option. The fact remains that Corwen is a place to see only when the weather is at its warmest.

I advise our Wayfarer to stay at Corwen, despite its ugliness and lack of sunshine, and despite the fact that it has not a single building possesssed of beauty or interest, just because it is such a typical Welsh market-town. So

few visitors come to it that it has remained largely unspoilt. It is the centre of a big agricultural district; and nowhere can one to better advantage watch the Welsh farmer and his wife. Of course no one will expect to see national costumes in Wales to-day; but if the farmers of Corwen are dressed very much like those of Norfolk their words, their gestures, and their habits are all their own.

Another reason for tarrying at Corwen is that it is a natural cross-roads, and we are called upon to decide upon the course of our future journeyings. Just before entering the station we notice another railway line joining ours almost at right angles; it is the L.M.S. line running up the Vale of Clwyd, and passing through such famous places as St. Asaph, Denbigh, and Ruthin. Travelling down it we should reach the coast at Rhyl; and then, either turn homewards in the direction of Chester, or proceed along the seashore to Llandudno and Bangor. Another possibility is to turn sharply to the right at Corwen, and explore, on foot or by car, the extensive uplands which stretch in a north-easterly direction as far as Wrexham. This district used to be called the Lordship of Yale. Again, if tired of the haunts of men we wish to find solitude as complete as any that can be discovered in this island south of the Cairngorms, we shall turn to the left, and penetrate the great Berwyn massif by any one of the numerous mountain tracks which lead across it. A glance at a good map will reveal the fact that the Dee valley is bounded on the north by this mountain barrier, which seldom falls below two thousand feet and often rises to three thousand. And not only is it high, but in most places it is several miles in breadth. There are interior valleys, most of which have tiny hamlets nestling in them; but they are not connected with the outer world on the north side except by lanes

fit only for rough farm-carts and pack-horses. I believe that motor-cars which are 'warranted to go anywhere' occasionally traverse them; but no self-respecting car would choose to put itself to such a trial. To all intents and purposes this mountain barrier has always been insurmountable, with the result that the people who dwell on either side have been completely separated, and have developed different dialects and different customs. From the Berwyn valleys the natural outlets are towards the north, and their inhabitants consequently belong to Mid Wales. The pedestrian will find the Berwyns a fascinating region to wander in. He might start from Corwen, cross several interesting ridges to the lonely Lake Vyrnwy, then follow a good road to Dinas Mawddwy, and so back to civilization again at either Machynlleth or Dolgelley. Vyrnwy is a good place for a stay, for there is a good modern hotel well placed on a wooded hill above the lake, excellent fishing, and innumerable walks. The lake, which is five miles long and a mile wide, is artificial, having been made to provide Liverpool with water. 'Artificial' has an unpleasant sound, especially when the word is applied to natural things like lakes; but before categorically declaring that an 'artificial lake' must be an abomination, I beseech the open-minded traveller to pay a visit to Vyrnwy. It is much too far from the beaten tracks for it to be a popular haunt; but the walker and the angler can always count upon finding a select and congenial company in the smoke-room of its hotel.

There remains a fourth choice for the traveller who has got as far as Corwen, and that is to follow the Dee as far at least as Bala Lake. This is the course which the vast majority of tourists who enter Wales through Ruabon take. Those who come from the south will have left Paddington

at eleven in the morning by what purports to be, and as far as Ruabon actually is, an express. From Paddington to the Welsh coast is about two hundred miles; and at Ruabon some hundred and forty of these miles have been traversed. It is only then that the chagrined Wayfarer realizes that it will take him almost as long to travel the remaining sixty miles as it did to travel the former hundred and forty! But these trains in Wales have become proverbial, and it is useless to say more. Fortunately the traveller gets less and less dependent upon them; and if they refuse to mend their ways he has now a remedy in his own hands! Even the journey down to the coast is nothing for dilatoriness compared with the journey back again. It takes, by the fastest train, three hours or so to do the sixty miles between Barmouth and Ruabon! Is it to be wondered at that few have anything more than a half-reluctant glance of admiration to bestow upon the glorious vistas of the Dee as the train crawls along, or that they are loath to break the journey even to see Llangollen or Bala? Their one and only desire is to be done with the nightmare journey as quickly as possible. We, however, must exercise patience, and must explore to left and right as we procced.

Corwen is the obvious starting-point for an expedition down the Vale of Clwyd, and at least a good long day, preferably in a car, should be devoted to it. In days gone by this valley used to be enormously admired for the fertility of its soil; so much so that 'as rich as Clwyd' became a proverbial expression. No doubt it is as attractive as ever to the farmer; but the Wayfarer views things with rather a different eye, and it must be owned that the valley of Clwyd, with all its agricultural opulence, is, from the service point of view, about the most disappoint-

ing in the whole of North Wales. On either side there are sweeping uplands, glorious heather-clad moorlands, and even some quite respectable hills, but the valley itself is tame to a degree. It contains, however, three towns—Ruthin, Denbigh, and St. Asaph—that are entirely worthy of a visit.

This valley was thoroughly Normanized in the Middle Ages. Great nobles built and occupied the castles of Ruthin and Denbigh; while their followers settled in country houses throughout the district. Dr. Johnson, when he visited Denbigh in company with Mrs. Thrale, noticed the large number of mansions in the vicinity; indeed, the learned man was pleased to say that he had never seen so many fine ones within so small a compass. They are pleasant, sleepy little places, these country towns of Clwyd; more picturesque than Corwen, and to-day equally Welsh. For the Norman settlers soon began to intermarry with the natives, and after a few generations became quite undistinguishable from them. The old Norman names linger there to this day—Towerbridge, Thelwell, Clough, Ashpool, Dryhurst, Myddleton, Heaton, Chambres, Dilben, Peake, Goodman—and it must not be forgotten that the bearer of one of these ancient names is as good a Welshman as any Jones, Rhys, or Morris you may come across.

Denbigh and Ruthin share between them the distinction of being Assize towns. Both possess the remains of great Norman castles. Denbigh, in particular, is an interesting place. No town could be more thoroughly Welsh to-day. Indeed, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century it was one of the chief centres of the national revolt against alien oppression. Thomas Gee, the greatest of its citizens, was a journalist of the front rank; a journalist,

of course, in the old dignified sense, who lived before the days of illustrated papers and boosting in general. His paper, *Y Faner* (*The Banner*), became one of the most powerful influences in Welsh politics, and took a leading part in the fight for Disestablishment and the defence of the rights of the tenant farmer. Another famous Denbigh name is that of Clough. This family was founded in the reign of Elizabeth by Sir Richard Clough, a man who began life penniless, and ended as the wealthy partner of Sir Thomas Gresham. For many years he lived in Flanders, where he married a Flemish wife. Those who know about such things tell us that even at this distant date Flemish influences can be traced in many buildings in and around Denbigh. Mrs. Thrale was a descendant of the first Clough, which accounts for her visit to Denbigh with Dr. Johnson. Virtue has by no means gone out of the old family. In the nineteenth century it produced Arthur Hugh Clough the poet, and Anne Jemima Clough, pioneer in the cause of the higher education of women and first head of Newnham College.

A few miles farther down the valley we come to St. Asaph. Although nothing more than a large village it is the cathedral city of the diocese; and at present (1930) its bishop enjoys the distinction of holding the office of Archbishop of Wales. When the Welsh Church was set up as an independent organization after the passing of the Disestablishment Act, the authority of Canterbury, of which province Wales had for centuries formed a part, was thrown off. It was decided, however, that no Welsh diocese should carry with it the Archbishopric of the whole country, but that one of the Welsh bishops should be elected to that office for life. The first choice fell upon the even then aged Bishop Edwards of St. Asaph, a man who

had been a keen fighter against Disestablishment. The appointment was not a happy one; for the new Archbishop had never identified himself in any way with anything peculiarly Welsh. English influences had got so powerful a hold upon the Anglican Church in Wales that they could not all at once be shaken off. There are signs, however, that things are mending in this respect; but it must be borne in mind that the large number of English people now living in Wales are almost all episcopalians, and that consequently, in a democratically governed institution such as the present Welsh Church, it is inevitable that they should carry great weight.

St. Asaph need not detain us long. Its cathedral is smaller, and much less interesting, than many a village church in England. But a cathedral has stood on the site ever since the sixth century. Giraldus Cambrensis, whom we must know as the author of the first wayfaring book about Wales, describes it as it appeared to him in 1188 as 'the poor little church of Llan Elwy'. The church which he saw has long since vanished, as have successive editions of it; but none of them have attained either size or architectural distinction. The present building was erected in the reign of Henry VII. These cathedrals have counted hardly at all in recent centuries, for the simple reason that they chose to ally themselves with the castle and the manor in antagonism to the life of the common people. In the eighteenth century Wales became overwhelmingly Nonconformist; not only were three-quarters of the people thenceforward outside the Established Church, but those outside included practically everybody that counted in Welsh affairs. Every national movement, every national aspiration, grew on Nonconformist ground. Between 1700 and 1870 not a single Welshman held a

bishopric in Wales. The English bishops who occupied the Welsh sees were often brazen time-servers and jobbers; sometimes they were learned and pious men; never, however, were they Welsh patriots. And Welsh life took its revenge by flowing in other channels, leaving the Established Church high and dry.

Beyond St. Asaph is Rhuddlan Castle. In a land like Wales, which simply teems with castles, nothing need be said about one which presents no feature of special interest. Rhuddlan is a picturesque ruin, and it has had a great past. But a few minutes will suffice for its inspection; and the traveller, now within sight of the sea, can retrace his steps to Corwen. If he can contrive to do so with the poignant strains of the ancient dirge, 'Morfa Rhuddlan', sung to the appropriate accompaniment of a harp, sounding in his ears, so much the better! Strolling minstrels who can provide such a treat are still to be found in Wales. One day, to avoid a thunder shower, I turned into the big shed, hard by the Swallow Falls of Bettws-y-Coed, which has been erected to fortify the inner man of the thousands of tourists who visit that beautiful spot every day in the summer season. I have nothing but praise for the plain meal with which I was served; but the treat of the occasion, doubly appreciated inasmuch as it was wholly unexpected, was a programme of real Welsh music played by an itinerant harpist. The harp appeals but little to me when I hear it in the concert hall, and still less when I hear it on the Eisteddfod platform, but played as it should be, to the accompaniment of good cheer, few instruments are so delightful. Might I recommend it to the consideration of those misguided managers of big town restaurants and hotels, who imagine that they are pleasing their guests by providing an orchestra so large and noisy

that conversation within a hundred yards' range of it is a sheer physical impossibility?

Having got back to Corwen from our brief exploration of the Vale of Clwyd, let us proceed on our way up the valley of the Dee. There opens up before us now the broad Vale of Edeyrnion. Here the hills have receded, and are much more rounded in outline, while the river flows more gently through mile after mile of fertile meadowland. This part of the valley is certainly beautiful; but it has none of the gorgeous colour of the stretch between Carrog and Llangollen, nor any of the grandeur of the bleak and rocky uplands whereon the Dee has its source. Villages and country houses lie scattered about. The fishing is good; and so is the shooting, but such things are not for the passing traveller. There is no need to linger before Bala is reached, unless, perhaps, we care to have a look at the church of Llandderfel for the sake of one memory pertaining to it. One of the agents employed by Thomas Cromwell for the uprooting of ancient superstitions was a Welshman of the name of Ellis Price, popularly known as the 'Red Doctor'. He was a kindly individual who seems to have entertained much good-natured contempt for all forms of religion. We possess the reports which he dispatched to Cromwell from the places which he visited. The destruction of idols was one of the things that he was commissioned to do. One of these idols has earned for itself a tragic fame. It was an immense wooden image of Derfel Gadarn, clothed in complete armour, and it stood in this little church of Llandderfel. So popular was this figure, says Price in a letter to Cromwell, that people 'come daily in pilgrimage to him, some with kine, some with oxen and horses, and the rest with money, insomuch that there were five or six hundred, to a man's estimation,

that offered to the said image the fifth day of this month of April. The innocent people hath been sore allured and enticed to worship, insomuch as there is a common saying amongst them that, whosoever will offer anything to the image of Derfel Gadarn, he hath power to fetch him or them that so offer, out of hell.' Cromwell commanded that the image should be sent to London, and an offer of the parishioners to ransom it for forty pounds was rejected. Its arrival in the metropolis was opportune. A Welsh prophecy had declared that, some day, Derfel Gadarn would set a forest on fire. Now the prophecy was to be fulfilled. The great doll was hewn in pieces, and used to burn a friar of the name of Forest, who had denied the royal supremacy! Inhabitants of Edeyrnion very likely still have their superstitions and their idols; but they are certainly less picturesque than those of old. I should like to have been present to see the farmers of the neighbourhood bringing together all their loose cash on that tragic day four centuries ago, and offering it to the unbelieving and unimaginative Government official to ransom the best thing that they, poor pagans, had ever learnt to know!

CHAPTER V

IN THE HEART OF MERIONETH

BALA lies in the heart of Merionethshire, the county which, together with Caernarvonshire, is the real 'playground' of Wales. If the Wayfarer wants sea, with fine stretches of sand or rugged cliffs, he can find them at a score or more of charming resorts, varying in size from small towns like Aberdovey, Barmouth, and Pwllheli, to tiny villages like Llwyngwril, Llanbedr, and Aberdaron. If he is a good walker, and not afraid of steep hills, here he will find miles upon miles of mountain paths, acres upon acres of open moorlands; and he can wander at will, hither and thither, for a month without ever beholding a threatening notice to trespassers, or ever being warned to keep clear of partridges or grouse. It is this perfect liberty to wander whither one wills that makes North Wales so much better worth visiting than the Highlands of Scotland. Far be it from me to assign the palm of beauty; but I will say that beauty to which only rich folk in quest of deer or grouse have access is not of much use to the ordinary man who, with rucksack on his shoulders and a stout stick in his hand, wants to do his twenty miles a day over moor and fell without encountering a barbed-wire fence or the surly face of a keeper. I have repeatedly tramped in every direction over the hills and moorlands of North Wales on the 12th of August, on the 1st of September, on the 1st of October, and on such-

like interesting anniversaries, and no one has ever tried to hinder me. Even the Welsh farmer is marvellously indulgent to trespassers. Of course he will not tolerate injury to his crops of wheat, barley, or oats, nor is he pleased to behold people wading knee-deep through his hay, or leaving gates open for animals to stray out of their proper enclosures; but when none of those evil things are being done, you may clamber over stiles, follow any paths, or even walk across fields, without let or hindrance. Such hospitable behaviour is necessarily based upon confidence in the considerate demeanour of the trespasser; and I have been told more than once of late by farmers, that the tourist of to-day is not so considerate as him of former days; he is less careful to shut gates, he pulls down loose stones from the mountain walls, he tramples down infant crops, and perpetrates other enormities of that kind. Should such carelessness become the characteristic of tourists, the inevitable will follow: farmers will erect their warning signs, and permission will no longer be given to walk save where the law allows. I trust that the comparatively small number of delinquents will take warning in time; for if they disregard it, not they alone will have to pay the penalty, but all the hosts of well-behaved persons who derive such supreme pleasure from freely rambling over the farms of Wales. The climber, in contradistinction to the walker, will also find ample scope for his activities in Merionethshire and Caernarvonshire. The Arenig, the Arans, Cader Idris, the Rhinogs, Moelwyn, and all the well-known peaks of Snowdonia, constitute an arena in which the rock climber, and occasionally in the winter season the expert of the ice-axe, can show his prowess.

At Bala one can settle down comfortably for a week or

more. The little town is clean, though not ornamental. Close by is a lake, some four miles in length and a mile or more in breadth, on which you can scull in perfect safety, while enjoying the very fine mountain scenery which presents itself in every direction. There are fish, too, I am told, in the lake, and the skilful angler may succeed in catching them. More interesting, perhaps, for the fisherman are the numerous streams which come down from the hills, and which are well stocked with trout. At the far end of the lake stands Aran Mawddwy, one of the most imposing of all the mountains of Wales, and by its side the scarcely less majestic Aran Benllyn. They rear their heads respectively to a height of 2,972 feet and 2,901 feet. The first thing one ought to do, I suppose, after arriving at Bala is to see Bala itself. Unfortunately, however, I can never resist the lure of the mountains; and I must put off my exploration of the little town until I have scaled one or two of the highest peaks on the horizon.

The Merionethshire Arans are real mountains, not grassy and rounded hills. Feldberg, for example, is much higher; but when standing on its broad summit you might easily suppose yourself to be on Leith Hill, or even on the downs above Weymouth. Not so, however, on the Arans. On the east side, particularly, are precipitous black rocks, which the novice in the art of mountaineering would be well advised to avoid unless accompanied by an experienced guide; but the seasoned cragsman will find on them exhilarating and perfectly safe sport.

The two Arans may be ascended either from the village of Llanuwchllyn in the north, or from Dinas Mauddwy in the south. Personally I prefer the former route; for by it you ascend terrace after terrace, following the ridge which

seems to run like a spinal cord from the foot of the mountains to its summit. I always like to think of a mountain as alive, as a friend with whom I am out to spend the day. I hate all short cuts to the summit. Just as when approaching some lordly mansion I should prefer to enter by the lodge gates, then to follow all the sinuosities of the drive, rather than to make a dash over fences and through plantations towards the back door; so with a mountain do I prefer to follow its natural rises step after step until the highest pinnacle is reached. This may not be the best way to tackle the Alps; but then we are speaking of the friendly hills of Wales, not of the majestic peaks so far aloof that any thought of friendship with them would savour of impertinence!

Another reason for choosing the Llanuwchllyn route is that it takes us by a small farmhouse which lies a mile or so from the main road. It is little more than a cottage, with two or three fields, only fit for grazing and potato growing, surrounding it. Life in such a place, especially a generation ago, must have been hard in the extreme. There could be no luxury, and but little of ordinary comfort. Yet in that cottage was born, some seventy years ago, one of the greatest Welshmen of modern times. With nothing to trust to but his own marvellous intellectual gifts and his own untiring industry, the lad proceeded to school and college at Bala, afterwards to Aberystwyth, then to Glasgow, and finally to Balliol. At Oxford he captured the three chief History prizes, a thing, I am told, which no other man has ever done. Then he became Fellow of Lincoln and one of the ablest Tutors in the University. At a later date, when the educational needs of Wales had at long last won the attention of Whitehall, he was chosen to fill the newly created post of Chief

Inspector for Wales. In that capacity he laboured strenuously for years, endeavouring to transform Welsh education from being a mere imitation of that of England into something better calculated to suit the real characteristics and needs of the people. These things, and the fact that he enriched historical literature with a brilliant volume on Wales, is all that the average Englishman knows about Owen Morgan Edwards. But for the Welshman these achievements, though he is naturally proud of them, are but asides in the really important life-work of this great man. His greatest work was to give to the Welsh language a new lease of life, partly by himself writing a large number of books, gay, humorous, and wise, in the most inimitable Welsh prose; partly by editing and publishing in cheap editions the works of all the chief Welsh poets, thus making them accessible to all; and partly by inducing the authorities to make the learning of Welsh compulsory in all elementary schools. The fact that practically everybody in Wales to-day reads Welsh with facility, and that there is an abundant supply of good literature for them to read, is owing very largely to the devoted labours of this great-hearted and highly gifted scholar. Let those who cannot read his books at least raise their hats as they pass the little farmhouse of Coed-y-Pry.

By whatever route it is reached, the summit of the Aran is well worth reaching, for it is one of the finest view-points in the whole of Wales. As every mountaineer knows, it is not mere height that guarantees wide prospects: the all-important condition is that our mountain should stand well apart from other mountains of approximately equal altitude. This is the case with the Aran. It is consequently well worth while to choose a day when visibility is good. There are many such days in May, June, and September.

What the Wayfarer in Wales should learn as early as possible, and never afterwards forget, is that July and August, generally speaking, are not desirable months for a holiday in the Principality—except, of course, for those queer folk who are content to go about in closed motor-cars, sallying forth now and again to view one of the more easily reached 'sights'. Granted a clear day, the panorama beheld from the Aran is extraordinarily fine and extensive. There are no very high mountains in the immediate vicinity to cut off the view, as is so often the case in the Snowdonian group of giants; and there is no better platform from which to behold in all their majesty the slopes of the Berwyns, Cader Idris, Plynlimmon, Arenig, and the great peaks of Caernarvonshire.

Another good climb to be undertaken from Bala is that of Arenig Fawr, an imposing mountain 2,800 feet in height. George Borrow was more impressed by the Arenig than by any other Welsh mountain; and, indeed, when viewed across Bala Lake, with the last rays of the setting sun shining upon its rugged precipices, it does afford a spectacle not easily forgotten or surpassed. The best way to ascend it is to take the train to the lovely little station of Arenig, on the branch line between Bala and Festiniog, and then make straight for the summit. The railway here, and on to its terminus at Blaenau Festiniog, traverses one of the wildest and bleakest regions in Wales. There are several stations with scarcely a single house in sight; and until Trawsfynydd is reached we see nothing that could be termed a village. At Arenig the railway in 1,135 feet above the sea; while at Cwm Prysor, its highest point, it reaches an altitude of 1,315 feet. On either side the line are bogs, with jet-black pools in their broken surface. Much peat is cut in this district, and stacks of it, fashioned into

blocks of the size and shape of a brick, drying in the sun, are characteristic features of the landscape. If you enter any farmhouse on the Merionethshire uplands you will immediately detect the pungent, but far from unpleasant, odour of burning peat. In the kitchen you will behold the great open fireplace with this ancient form of fuel brightly burning in it, and the iron pot in which the lobscouse (a much-improved kind of Irish stew) for the family dinner is cooking hanging above it by a chain. It is a well-known fact that there is nothing more capable than a characteristic odour of calling up associated images in the human mind; and I never come across the smell of burning peat without having called before my mind's eye the interior of a North Wales farm kitchen.

Beyond the peat bogs you are immediately out on the open mountain-side. These lower slopes of the Welsh hills are covered with grass of a peculiar greenish-yellow tint, and it does not vary much at any time of year. Admiration of it is, I have come to the conclusion, a thing to be acquired. I have known visitors from lands where the sward is of emerald green liken it to a lawn-tennis court which has been much played upon in a prolonged drought, and refuse to it the slightest meed of admiration. Those of us, however, who know it well would not exchange it for the June flowers of Tyrol, nor for the tropical luxuriance of the Conca d'Oro. Its homely beauty and perfect fitness reminds us of some simple garment worn by one whom we loved when we were young. Many artists have tried to paint these Welsh mountain slopes, but few can be said to have succeeded in capturing the elusive charm of the close yellow-green grass.

These grassy slopes provide sustenance for hundreds of thousands of the small agile Welsh sheep whose flesh

is regarded as such a delicacy across the border. Throughout the summer months these sheep roam freely over the uplands, and only in winter are they driven to the more restricted quarters of the fields below. Except for the characteristic walls, sometimes very high, and built of loose stones without mortar, all the mountain-sides are entirely open. Often one sees a wall starting in the valley below, and running up, as straight as a Roman road, to the very summit of the hill fifteen hundred or two thousand feet above. Where the stones came from, how they were brought together, and who built the walls, are questions to which I have never succeeded in obtaining satisfactory answers. Ask one of the stray shepherds about them, or one of the good women of the nearest farm, and they will shake their heads doubtfully and tell you that the wall has always been there, just as the mountain itself has always been. At least they must be extremely ancient, and succeeding generations keep them in repair. Their purpose is to mark the boundaries of neighbouring farms and to prevent the straying of animals. Not that they serve the latter purpose very effectually. A mountain sheep thinks nothing of climbing a ten-foot stone wall; and furthermore, every wall has an aperture, called in Welsh a 'sheep-hole', left in it, through which the weaklings can freely pass. The lover of the Welsh hills soon gets to like these mountain sheep, for they, and an occasional bird, are the only living things that he is likely to encounter in the course of a long summer's day. Even the most misanthropic climber may be counted upon to regard with indulgence fellow-lovers of the high hills so silent and so untroublesome as these!

But besides their silent companionship which he always has, there are two events in the life of the mountain sheep

which the traveller ought on no account to miss: one is the marvellous manœuvres by which they are gathered together by the wonderfully trained dogs; the other is the annual shearing. 'Sheep-dog Trials' are now organized on a competitive basis, and one such display is likely to come within reach of every visitor to North Wales in the summer season. The feats performed by a farmer and a couple of well-trained dogs are almost uncanny in their cleverness. How any person who has seen them can ever afterwards hold that the dog is incapable of reasoning, and of exercising real thought, is to me incomprehensible. The shearing, if less wonderful, is still a most interesting spectacle. Not only does the Welsh lamb produce better mutton than its more aristocratic brother of the South Downs, but it also has a better coat. Lambs are born, of course, during the season passed by the sheep in the comfortable shelter of the valleys, at any time between Christmas Day and the end of February. But with the first coming of spring they are taken to the mountains, where they remain until the end of June. Then the ewes are shorn. This is a great business, and it is done by gangs of expert shearers who travel from farm to farm. Many farmers own several thousands of sheep, and the task of shearing them is a big one. But the shearers are good workers; they labour for sixteen hours a day, and a man of ordinary skill can shear as many as a hundred and fifty ewes in a day. First the dogs are sent to gather together all the sheep on a particular mountain. This may prove a long job, for the animals are roaming at large over an area of several square miles, and there are many hundreds of them. When they have been got together they are assembled in pens, constructed wherever possible close to a mountain rivulet. Then the work of shearing begins in earnest. Each sheep

is held upside down, while the shears, expertly and rapidly plied, remove the entire fleece. The shorn animal is next branded with its owner's mark, dipped in the stream, and turned out to graze in company with the sheep of other owners on the open mountain. Attempts have recently been made to introduce machines for shearing purposes into Wales; but the Welsh farmer is at least as conservative as his English brother, and the hand-shears are still almost universally employed. I am told that a machine does not do the work much more efficiently than an expert shearer.

At Bala much of the characteristic life of Wales can be studied; but in order to see it to the fullest advantage the Wayfarer ought to visit it in winter. Bala is not one of those towns, so numerous on the seacoast, which undergo a complete transformation in the summer, all native activities being completely suspended while the entire population devotes itself with all its energies to making the place attractive for visitors; nevertheless, even Bala does feel the influence of the foreigner, and to share its intimacies we must go thither some time between October and March.

Bala, though possessing a population of only between two and three thousand, has always been a place of importance on account of its educational and religious activities. For generations now it has owned a grammar school, a theological college, and a printing-press. Wales is overwhelmingly a Nonconformist country; and in a sense Bala has been the Mecca of its Nonconformity. There, a century ago, dwelt the famous 'Charles o'r Bala,' the founder of Sunday Schools in Wales, and one of the daring leaders who organized the Calvinistic Methodist Body as a Church separate from the Church of England. Later, when it became necessary to train ministers for

the newly constituted Church, a theological college was founded at Bala, and it still flourishes. It is not easy to explain to the outsider the part which religion has played, for a hundred years or more, in the life of Wales, and the unique hold which preaching has had upon the affections of the Welshman. Yet not to appreciate this fact is to pass by the real heart of Welsh life as a closed book. The average Englishman, however pious he may be, for the most part regards a sermon as something to be endured, not as something to be looked forward to. A great crowd such as assembles on Epsom Downs for the Derby would undoubtedly feel incensed if they were told that, by way of variety, instead of seeing horses racing that day they would have the pleasure of hearing two of England's most eloquent divines preaching sermons. But the extraordinary thing is that a miscellaneous crowd of Welsh people would actually feel elated at the prospect. It is an undoubted fact that they would rather hear two sermons than see a horse-race, or a play, or a film, or anything else in the world!

You may be staying in any Welsh town or village, and on leaving your hotel one morning be surprised to see the shops closed, and the streets full of people all dressed soberly, but in what is obviously their Sunday-best. You stop and inquire what it is that has disturbed the even tenor of village life, for nothing quite so big as this occurs even on fair-days, still less on national holidays. Your interlocutor will then inform you that a Preaching Meeting is to be held that day, and that not only is every workman taking a holiday, and every shop closed, but that special trains and motor-buses are pouring all the inhabitants of the surrounding country into the place. From what distance these outsiders come will

depend upon the reputation of the preachers. If the orators are men of real fame the congregation will be drawn from a radius of at least thirty miles.

Having the good fortune to know Welsh, and to have been brought up in these surroundings, I have been present at a great many Preaching Meetings, as well as at the much bigger Quarterly and Annual Meetings which are held with the same purpose. The plan of all of them is the same. They usually begin with an evening meeting, and long before the appointed hour the chapel is besieged by people who do not wish to be without seats. Not only is every seat taken but benches are brought into the aisles, and frequently every inch of space, including window-ledges and pulpit stairs, is occupied. There is a hush of expectation, which has nothing to do with devotion, but is rather the suppressed excitement which fills every crowd waiting for the appearance of a hero or a 'star'. Presently a local minister climbs into the pulpit and gives out a hymn. It is sung with all the fervour which the world has come to expect from a gathering of Welsh people. Who would not sing fervently the grand old melodies of Wales, so different from the banal tunes of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*? While the congregation is singing the door opens, and a middle-aged man enters. All eyes are riveted upon him, for everybody knows that he is the younger of the two preachers who are to take part. He walks down the aisle and seats himself in the Big Pew, the enclosed and cushioned seat, immediately in front of the pulpit, reserved for Deacons. Before the hymn is ended an older man appears, and with his coming excitement reaches its height, for he is the star performer of the occasion. It is one of the unwritten rules of Welsh preaching festivals that one of the two men invited should be comparatively

young, one who has made a reputation for himself and yet not reached the pinnacles of fame; while the second preacher is a man of mature years, a veteran who has won the finest laurels of the pulpit for a generation at least.

And now both preachers are seated in the Big Pew, while the standing congregation brings the hymn to a close. Then follow a short Bible reading, another hymn, and a prayer, all by a local man. At the conclusion of the prayer the younger of the two visiting preachers ascends the pulpit and gives out a hymn. It is sung, and sung again, and then the congregation composes itself to listen. The first preacher is expected to be brief; that is to say, his sermon must not occupy more than one hour; but there will be keen disappointment if he takes less time than that. His business is to kindle enthusiasm, and, if possible, to work up the congregation to such a pitch that the great man who is to follow will find it, so to speak, like clay in the hands of the potter. There are no cheers in the ordinary sense, but it must not be supposed that a Welsh audience listens in silence. Every clever sally is greeted with approving grunts; passages of moving eloquence are received with rapturous cries; tears are freely shed; loud laughter is indulged in. But the first preacher must not expect too much of these things: his reputation is still something that remains to be made, and the people listen to him somewhat critically.

The first sermon over, the second preacher, in turn, ascends the pulpit, and gives out a hymn, usually in a scarcely audible voice. Now the congregation is really excited, as can be inferred from the passionate way in which it sings. Then follows *the* event of the evening, in fact *the* event of the year for many a Welsh village. Less than an hour the preacher assuredly will not take, and

his listeners will be all the better pleased if he takes an hour and a half. With his peroration, delivered with all the force of a powerful and musical voice, and with the far-famed intonation (*hwyl*) of the Welsh pulpit, the congregation becomes indeed clay in his hands. Gusts of emotion sweep over it. Big men weep like children, and quite often men and women will stand up and shout in ecstasy. A final prayer and hymn bring the service to a close.

All this takes place on the opening night. It will be thrice repeated next day—in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. Thus eight sermons will have been delivered, and greedily absorbed, within twenty-four hours. I suppose my English reader is by now declaring that he would prefer the treadmill to this! But I must beg him to take my word for it that the whole population of the villages and the smaller towns of Wales look forward to it as the crowning event of the year; and even the coming of the gramophone, the wireless, and the cinema has done little to lessen the attraction. I know of a town in Wales whose young people felt, one winter recently, that they would like to give themselves a big treat, something to break effectually the monotony of life. What they did was to institute a house-to-house collection in order to amass a good fee, and then to invite one of the greatest preachers in the land to come and deliver two sermons! It is not for me, luckily, to pronounce judgment upon the religious value of such meetings: I am simply describing an essential feature of contemporary Welsh life. Putting it at its very lowest, appreciation of preaching as an art is a vastly better thing than fox-hunting, or greyhound-racing, or boxing. It does show the sort of cultivation which led the Greeks of old to the Athenian market-place

to listen to the orations of their finest orators. The indisputable fact that a Welsh peasant, or a small Welsh shopkeeper, is worlds above men of the same class in England is to be attributed almost wholly to the cultural influence of the pulpit.

'What are your impressions of Wales?' I once asked a man who had been there on a holiday for the first time in his life. 'Beautiful hills and hideous chapels', was his prompt reply. In a sense his summing-up was a just one, for in Wales it is difficult to look in any direction without seeing either hill or chapel. Nor can it be denied that the former are mostly very beautiful, and the latter almost always very ugly. Still, I want to put in a word for those little grey buildings, often indistinguishable from the cow-houses close to which they stand. With infinitely less true beauty than the English village church, the Welsh country chapel has quite as much charm of its own for those who have been initiated into its secret; and it has played a much bigger part, at any rate in the last hundred years, in the life of the little community which it serves. Do not forget that in all rural districts (and Wales is mainly rural) the chapel is something much more than a building set apart for public worship: it is the one social centre, and the one cultured centre as well. In it concerts, literary and debating meetings, and Eisteddfodau are held. Lectures are given in it. Tea-parties and socials are organized and held. In fact, it is temple, university, and club all in one. There are many districts in Wales, mostly in the wild northern parts, where no village is near. Farms are scattered about at a distance of a mile or more from one another. For all such farms, dotted over an area of several miles, the only common meeting-ground is the little grey chapel, ugly to be sure, but still the only symbol among these

remote people of community and culture. These conditions are, of course, changing to-day. The motor-bus goes everywhere where there are roads, and it is now possible for the majority of farmers and their families to visit the nearest village pretty frequently. Moreover, there are Women's Institutes and Tutorial Classes within reach. These things now shoulder some of the responsibilities which hitherto have rested exclusively upon the shoulders of the chapel and its officers. It remains to be seen what the future will bring; but the magnificent work of the 'little Bethels' of Wales in the past must never be forgotten.

A stay of a week's duration at Bala is almost certain to produce one wet day, and such a day can be usefully employed in looking about the little town. Not that there is much to see, for the glories of Bala, apart from natural scenery, consist of memories and traditions and such-like intangible things. But the College, founded in 1837, which is one of the places where young men are trained for the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Ministry, is worthy of a visit. On the lawn outside is a fine statue, executed by Goscombe John, of Lewis Edwards, one of the finest of Welsh scholars and writers, and a leading pioneer in the field of higher education. The clean, wide high street is pleasant, and every visitor ought to notice the bronze statue, also by Goscombe John, of Thomas Ellis, the son of a neighbouring farm, who became M.P. for his native county, and Chief Whip in the short-lived Rosebery Administration. Not even Mr. Lloyd George himself has so won the affections of the Welsh people as this patriotic and far-sighted statesman, who unfortunately died at the age of forty, just as he had succeeded in winning for himself a position in Parliament which would have enabled him to further the interests of his native land.

Bala is, for a place of its size, unusually well off for statues, and those good ones. There is yet a third. You will find it in front of the big Methodist Chapel. It represents Thomas Charles (Charles o'r Bala), whom I have already mentioned as one of the founders of modern Welsh Nonconformity. The house in which he lived, immediately opposite the White Lion Hotel, is marked by a tablet. He has been called, not inaptly, 'the Wesley of Wales'. The practice of commemorating celebrities in marble or bronze is surely something to be encouraged. But the statue ought not to be taken to Westminster Abbey, or to the Houses of Parliament, where it will be lost sight of in the crowd. It is in his native place that a man's statue ought to stand, for there the daily sight of it will keep his memory green; and the villagers, and the dwellers in farms round about, may be inspired to follow in his footsteps. Welshmen of distinction have been amply provided with biographies, but there are comparatively few worthy monuments in the streets and market-places.

But it is high time to leave Bala. The worst of travelling in Wales is that there are dozens of places where one is tempted to settle down with the exclamation: 'This is indeed perfection. Here let me stay, and never wander.' Yet for the genuine Wayfarer that were treason to his ideals: for him there can be no rest till he knows the whole earth as he does his back garden.

Bala, like Corwen, is the meeting-place of many ways, and the traveller must make up his mind which of them to follow. This is largely a matter of inclination, for so far as I know there is no good reason for going one way rather than another. It is possible to take the wild mountain road, a road so rough that the motorist would be well advised to avoid it; and passing through the interesting

hamlet of Yspytty Ifan, which at one time belonged to the Knights Hospitallers of St. John (Yspytty = Latin *hospitium*), reach the great Holyhead road on its way from Corwen to Bettws-y-Coed. This would enable the traveller to see a part of Wales which is but little visited; but in a country which contains so much beauty its scenery is not distinguished, and without any severe qualms of conscience it may be left unvisited. To motor, or to walk, along the fine highway from Corwen to Bettws is pleasant, and on a clear day magnificent views of the mountains of Snowdonia are to be obtained. And, unless it has recently changed for the worse, the hotel at Pentre Voelas will provide a lunch so excellent that it is not likely to be forgotten in a hurry. Let him who despises such things rest assured that he has never discovered one of the supreme delights of wayfaring—the well-cooked and plentiful meal served in a cosy inn parlour at the end of a long tramp! Borrow, Hazlitt, and other good tramps have extolled these delights, and not without reason. Unfortunately, inns or hotels one can really look forward to are so scarce in Wales that I am only too pleased to refer to one when it lies on my path.

There remain two other choices for the traveller about to leave Bala. He can take the mountain road or the mountain railway which leads to Festiniog, and there think afresh what he would like to do. Or he can continue to follow the Dee, as he has been doing all the way from Llangollen, until he reaches its source on the high watershed a few miles beyond Llanuwchllyn, and then proceed down the valley to the coast at Barmouth. My advice would be to take this alternative. Assuredly Festiniog must be seen, for its scenery is of the grandest, and its people among the most courteous and intelligent in the

whole land; but I should prefer to visit it from the coast, travelling up the gloriously beautiful Vale of Maentwrog. It is true that the mountain road from Bala to Festiniog is of rare charm. It winds over moorland and mountain side, mile following mile without a trace of human habitation, one of the wildest regions in all Wild Wales. There are, however, very similar roads, and ones which fit in with our plan for seeing the whole country more easily. The possession of a motor-car would, of course, make all the difference; and if any of my readers find themselves in that enviable position, and with a day to spare at Bala, I assure them that they could not employ the time more profitably and agreeably than by a drive along the main road to Llan Festiniog, returning by another road through Maentwrog Uchaf and Trawsfynydd. There are petty annoyances, such as the execrable surface of the roads, and the many gates which the motorist will have to get out to open (and to close as well, I trust!); but what genuine Wayfarer cares about such things as those when he is passing through glorious scenery, open moorlands, majestic mountains, resounding cataracts, and here and there a sombre tarn, with air of unsurpassable purity, laden with that delicious perfume which one only meets with on the Welsh hills?

But we must now push on towards the coast. At Bala Junction we board a west-bound train; and here let me advise everybody who values comfort to avoid the express which has come from England, and to use the purely local service. The express (at least in the summer months, and at such times as Easter and Whitsun) will be crowded almost to suffocation with holiday-makers bound for the popular coast resorts, and every compartment will be a seething mass of men, women, and babies; while every

inch of space is blocked with suit-cases, buckets, spades, shrimp-nets, and such-like impedimenta of the Englishman at the sea. No great saving of time will be effected by putting up with such discomfort and travelling by express, for expresses between Ruabon and Barmouth (except, I suppose, to the official eye) are indistinguishable from ordinary trains. Indeed, I have heard it said by the flippant that the only difference between a G.W.R. express and a slow train in Wales is that the latter stops at all stations, while the former stops between all stations!

Ordinary trains are slow, but sufficiently comfortable. The route follows the south shore of Bala Lake throughout its length, and then begins to climb the steep ascent of the Garneddwen, the bleak watershed upon which the Dee takes its rise. As the train climbs on, snorting and puffing, we can either watch the craggy ridge of the Arenig disappearing from view on our right, or gaze at the towering summit of the Aran on our left. Almost at the highest point of the railway is a small pine wood surrounded by open moorland, which in turn merges into the precipitous slopes of the mountain on two sides. Behind, and in front, all is open, for we are here at the top of the pass. Looking back we see the whole of the narrow valley of the Dee as far as the lake we have just quitted, and beyond, the dim outlines of the Denbighshire hills. In front is a rocky glen, strewn with boulders, yet well-wooded, through which a typical Welsh river rushes towards the sea. Jaded travellers who have come from the Midlands, or farther, here hang out of carriage windows and eagerly breathe in the air, so deliciously cool even on a hot July afternoon. Truly it is a glorious spot; and I have always wondered why some enterprising person has not built a hotel there. But enterprise of that sort seems to flourish only in Alpine

regions, and it would, perhaps, be too much to expect to find it in Wales! Possibly we may improve in the future; at all events I gladly make a present of the suggestion. In spring, summer, autumn, and even winter, the spot is a delectable one. Golf links and tennis courts could easily be laid out, and Nature has already provided good fishing, first-class mountain walks, tonic air, and magnificent scenery.

From the summit of the Garneddwen the train races down to Dolgelley. So narrow is the valley that road and railway run side by side, now on this side of the river, now on the other. Some typical and picturesque farmhouses are dotted about, clinging to the steep mountain sides like flies on the walls of a room, and several fine old stone bridges; but although we stop at two railway-stations, there is no village anywhere in sight. Let me recommend to the traveller that he should sit on the left-hand side facing the engine, and to be on the look-out for the first glimpse of Cader Idris, most famous of Merionethshire mountains. A fine view of its summit, and of the outlying spur called Tyrrau Mawr, a hill which from this point resembles a pyramid, but which looked at from Barmouth seems to be a level ridge, is to be obtained on a clear day. Best of all is a day in January, when the sun is shining and all the mountains are draped in snow. It may be prejudice on my part, but I always think that on those occasions the panorama is as fine as that entrancing view of the Dauphiny Alps which one gets when travelling by the Mont Cenis route between Chambéry and Modane.

For a century at least Dolgelley has been a favourite haunt of walkers; and, indeed, it would be difficult to discover a better. Mountain roads and paths are innumerable; and it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that one

could easily spend a month there and never have to do the same walk twice. My only objection to the place is that it is surrounded by mountains of such height that it gets but little sun in winter, while it becomes insufferably stuffy in summer. Of course, it is easy to get out on to the hills; but for my own part I should prefer to find a perch on a more or less open mountain-side, or on the seacoast. Then, too, if truth be told, Dolgelley is a terribly rainy place. The town is dominated by Cader Idris: it towers here over the valley, effectually keeping out the sun, and just as effectually producing abundant showers.

Dolgelley is a small town composed of quaint irregular streets, with a population of between two and three thousand. But though so small, it enjoys the distinction of being the county town of Merioneth. Here twice in the year comes one of His Majesty's Judges to dispense justice at Assizes, and for two or three days the place awakens from its perennial slumber. Judges come there now without fear; indeed, I have heard it said that there is keen competition among them for the privilege of holding the Summer Assizes in Dolgelley, for it is known that criminals are few, and that in the district is to be found delightful scenery, good fishing, golf, and other attractions which even the judicial mind would not pretend to despise! But in the olden days it needed a brave man to come to these wild parts to punish the lawless inhabitants. In 1555 there lived at Dolgelley a certain Baron Owen. He was one of the Barons of the Caernarvon Exchequer, Sheriff of Merioneth, and Parliamentary representative for the county. Not far distant from Dolgelley is the secluded valley of Mawddwy, separated from it by a bleak plateau, a place so lonely that even as one traverses it to-day in a fast car on a good road one cannot escape a sense of

eeriness. In Baron Owen's day this valley was infested by a notorious band of red-headed bandits, who for long had been the terror of the whole country-side. The gallant Baron decided that they must be extirpated; and so, collecting together their retainers, he and John Wynn of Gwydir surprised them on Christmas Eve and put eighty of them to death. A mother begged hard for the life of her youngest son, but the stern agent of justice denied the boon. Then the dame bared her breasts and said: 'These have given suck to those that will wash their hands in thy life's blood.' Sometime later the Baron was returning to Dolgelley from Sessions at Welshpool. He had reached the loneliest point on the road when the brigands fell upon him. They slew him; and it is related that two men actually did wash their hands in his blood.

Dolgelley is a dignified little town, as befits a place which once saw the meeting of a Parliament within its bounds. A century ago it was also a prosperous industrial centre, excellent woollen stuffs being woven in its factories. Dolgelley flannel was famous. It used to be taken by road to Barmouth, which was then a flourishing port, and shipped to every part of Great Britain, and even to the Continent. Little remains to-day of this past glory. Still Dolgelley strives hard to keep up appearances, and to give one the impression that it is a place of importance. Of interesting historic buildings it contains hardly any. There is an old church-tower from which the curfew is rung every night. There is also a fine stone bridge over the River Wnion. But perhaps the most interesting thing is the comparatively modern, but excellent, boarding-school for girls—the Dr. Williams foundation. This school attracts pupils from every part of Wales and England, and it has had many distinguished people on its staff and among its

alumni. There are some comfortable hotels in the town, well used to the ways of climbers. They must, I think, have improved in recent times, for a distinguished member of the Alpine Club told me that he remembered being at Dolgelley some sixty years ago and finding the following rhyme inscribed in the Visitors' Book of his inn:—

> If ever you go to Dolgelley,
> Don't stay in the —— hotel;
> There's nothing to put in your belly,
> And no one to answer the bell.

It is at least a tribute to the tolerance, and perhaps to the self-confidence, of mine host that he permitted these derogatory lines to remain in the book open to the gaze of all!

In the past Dolgelley used to be dominated by the family of Nannau, Vaughan (ap Vychan) by name, one of the oldest and most respected families in Wales. The house is situated on a beautiful site several miles from the town, far from highroad and railway. It was there that Howel Sele, while out hunting, attempted to assassinate Owen Glyndwr, and that the latter slew his would-be murderer and hid his body in a hollow tree. This tree stood until 1813, when it was destroyed by lightning; but it has been immortalized not only by Clio, but also by Sir Walter Scott and Lord Lytton. For centuries the Vaughans of Nannau kept up a state almost regal. Middle-aged people to-day can remember the time when all the servants, men and women, wore the livery of the family, and filed into the great dining-room every evening when the imperious old lady of the house read prayers. But the glory of Nannau has fled before the encroachments of democracy; and no longer do Vaughans, or any other historic stock, step as

CADER IDRIS AND LLYN-Y-CAE

of right into such positions as those of Member of Parliament, High Sheriff, and Chairman of Quarter Sessions. Lovers of picturesque historic survivals may deplore it, but most people will doubtless rejoice. These old Welsh families were often genial and kindly in their relations with their tenants and servants, but it was tyranny wearing a velvet glove after all. There was no freedom for religious or political belief; and in the last two centuries few of these great ones of the land had remained loyal to the Welsh traditions, or truly cared for the culture of their race. It is for the Welsh people to see to it that the powers and the privileges which have been stripped from the old families do not now fall into the hands of tradesmen and the like who, having made their fortune in English towns, and knowing that there they will obtain no social recognition, come to Wales, where their origin is unknown, buy the old mansion houses, and in virtue of their money-bags, their Churchmanship, and their Conservative principles, set up as 'gentlemen'.

An excursion from Dolgelley which no one ought to miss is that around Cader Idris. The fortunate owner of a motor-car can do this easily, starting after lunch, taking his tea on the banks of the lovely Talyllyn Lake, and being back in good time for dinner. Even the more numerous, and less lucky, ones who have no cars can now do the round by means of the comfortable motor-buses which run in all directions. From Dolgelley the road climbs steadily to the pass above Talyllyn. This beautiful mountain tarn, dear to the hearts of anglers, lies right beneath the tremendous eastern precipices of Cader Idris. It is a delightful spot for a few days' stay, and there is good accommodation available at the two inns which stand close to the water's edge. In the fishing season they are apt to be crowded,

and it is advisable to book your room some weeks in advance. The tiny church ought to be visited, for it is very old and very beautiful in its simplicity. It possesses a curious painted roof, probably dating from the fifteenth century; for the roses on it almost certainly connect it with the wars of York and Lancaster. From Talyllyn the narrow road, on which for many miles it is impossible for two vehicles to pass, winds down the valley to within a mile of the pleasant and breezy little seaside resort of Towyn. It then turns northward, and follows the coast as far as Fairbourne, whose marvellous sands lie spread out below. Then it turns up the Mawddach Valley, leaving Barmouth on the opposite shore of the broad estuary, and so arrives at Dolgelley.

No sensible person, however, will remain content with motoring round Cader: he will insist on climbing to its summit. That is a task attended with no particular difficulty, danger, or fatigue. There are places where rocky slopes descend abruptly, and where men have got themselves into trouble; but the recognized routes are safe enough, and in no way overtax the strength of a fairly good walker. Several possible routes offer themselves for our choice. My own favourite is the one from Arthog, which joins the ordinary route from Dolgelley between Tyrrau Mawr and Pen-y-Gader, and then proceeds by a steep, though perfectly good, path to the summit. For the most part the path is easy to trace, and a guide is superfluous. This route is certainly long, and apt in places to be boggy; but it affords such a succession of magnificent and ever-changing views that one readily forgives it its little inconveniences. A more direct, but much steeper, route is that by the Foxes' Path. It has the advantage of leading us right under the terrific cliffs which flank the

mountain on this side, and past the ink-black waters of Llyn-y-Gader. The last five hundred feet or so is over scree, which makes the ascent exceedingly wearisome. I never go up by this route, though I often select it for the descent, which, especially in April, when snow is still plentifully mixed with the loose pebbles, may be quite an exhilarating and exciting experience. Much less used is the route from Talyllyn, but it is safe, and the path easy to follow.

It is a mistake to think that Cader Idris is the second highest mountain in Wales, for there are several peaks which excel it; nevertheless, it may fairly claim to come next after Snowdon in importance and popularity. Its height is only 2,927 feet, but as it rises almost straight out of the sea it gives the impression of being very much taller. The mountain lacks the exquisitely shaped cone-like summit which so easily wins for Snowdon the place of the most beautiful mountain in England and Wales. The summit of Cader is a blunt ridge. Beneath the highest ridge are other ridges, one below the other, growing broader and broader until the level of the sea is reached. Looked at from Barmouth, the mountain resembles a gigantic staircase, the first landing being the imposing and almost vertical cliffs of Tyrrau Mawr. Many a visitor to the coast has mistaken Tyrrau Mawr for Cader itself, for the latter is apt to hide itself in cloud, and sometimes for days at a time to refuse to allow even a fleeting glimpse of itself. Cader is an inexhaustibly varied mountain, in that respect even surpassing Snowdon itself. To know it properly it must be viewed from many points, some of them as much as twenty miles apart. No one has seen it at its best who has not stood on the hill behind Barmouth, while the fading light of an April evening slowly dies upon the cliffs

of its western face, and on a morning in winter when its snowy crown glitters in the sunshine.

Some will not care to climb to the summit of Cader, and none of us would wish to do so every day. It is well therefore to know that the foothills and the valleys by which the central mountain is surrounded offer an almost endless choice of fascinating rambles. A particularly delightful one is provided by the old grass-grown mediæval road which runs along the flank of the mountain, at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet above the sea, from Dolgelley to Towyn. It is about seventeen miles long, and it runs for several miles in full view of Cardigan Bay, which washes the foot of the hill below. Few prospects could surpass that which we behold from the highest points of the road. The eye wanders from Cader Idris to the Aran, from Aran to Diphwys, then on past the two Rhinogs to Snowdon, and finally to the Rivals and the Irish Sea beyond them. The whole of the bay, from St. David's in the far south to Aberdovey and Bardsey Island in the north, lies spread out beneath us; and looking at it from this standpoint it is easy to agree with Mr. Strachey that Cardigan Bay, the Bay of Naples, and the Bay of Eleusis are the three most beautiful bays in Europe. Wherever you happen to be staying—whether at Dolgelley, Arthog, Bontddu, Barmouth, Fairbourne, or Llwyngwril—it is easy to reach this old road; and the walk along it is a pleasure which no one ought to forgo. The pedestrian, angered by the perpetual stream of motors on the road below, can here be at ease, knowing that no car has ever desecrated the grassy surface of this ancient way, and in all probability never will. Even human beings are rare on the old road: I have frequently walked on it for a whole day without encountering anything save the mountain

sheep and an occasional shepherd with his dogs. Many lovers of the country-side declare that they will not go to such places as Barmouth on account of the crowds which infest them. If only these devotees of Nature (and I sympathize whole-heartedly with them) could be made to realize that a half-hour's climb will bring them to a region which not one visitor in a thousand ever discovers, and where they could spend weeks without encountering a living soul! The direct routes up Cader are often well-peopled in July, August, and early September; but the mountain is so vast that no reasonable person need be troubled by that: off the beaten track one can be absolutely alone.

An excursion which every visitor to Dolgelley feels bound to go on is that to the Precipice Walk. I rather distrust those expeditions which the guide-books mark with a double star, yet in this instance I admit that the advice is good. The 'precipice' is by no means alarming: the real charm of the walk lies in the views which it affords of the Tynygroes valley, with its waterfalls and beautifully wooded slopes.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMBRIAN COAST

IT is now high time for us to leave Dolgelley and to pursue our way to Barmouth. On no account ought the journey to be hurried; for have we not the high authority of Ruskin for maintaining that this road to Barmouth is only surpassed in beauty by the same road traversed in the contrary direction? Ruskin is certainly right in saying that the road towards the coast is the less beautiful. In proceeding seawards the valley opens, and across its wide mouth sprawls the mile-long wooden bridge which carries the railway across the estuary of the Mawddach. But coming up the valley, the estuary (in places well over a mile in width) looks, when the tide is in, like a great lake. Not only on both sides, but at the far end as well, mountains rise in tier after tier, their lower slopes clad in bracken and heather, with here and there a larch wood, while high above the rugged peaks tower into the very clouds. If you go direct to Barmouth by train, it is well to drive back up the valley at least as far as the charming little village of Bontddu; or if you should prefer the water, there are boats in plenty which you can hire. A good-sized motor-boat can go seven miles up the river.

The Mawddach (or Barmouth) estuary has been so often described, and is so well known, that I feel it is wellnigh needless for me to say much about it here. Without question it is the most beautiful thing of its kind in Wales, if not

in the world. Those who know the two will understand what I mean when I say that of all things it most resembles the Lake of Como. There you have the same narrowness, the same windings, the same arrangement of hills all round, and, in certain states of the weather, the same colouring. The Italian lake, of course, possesses the peculiar atmospheric charm characteristic of that region, and the picturesqueness of the villages on its shores is unrivalled. Nevertheless, I will make bold to state that the Welsh estuary is the more beautiful of the two. It possesses far more brightness and variety of colour; indeed, the Mawddach is to Como as a water-colour sketch is to an oleograph. Its beauty varies infinitely, and is impressive almost at all times. One sees it at its best, I think, on a summer evening when the tide is rushing in and there is sufficient breeze to fleck the tiny waves with foam. Yet there is much to be said for a stormy day in winter, when the waves run high and dark clouds are scudding overhead, casting their shadows on water and mountains. Any person with a true appreciation of beautiful scenery might be content to spend a month at Barmouth, at any season of the year, doing nothing but sit on the great bridge just looking at the estuary. In fact, its superlative beauty can only be properly known to one who has lived long with it, and in every mood. The only time when the Mawddach is uninspiring is on a perfectly calm and sunless day, when everything appears dead. Neither is it at its best when the tide is out, leaving mile upon mile of sand.

But I must not forget that we are still at Dolgelley, though our luggage is packed and we are about to start for Barmouth. There is a shorter road which crosses the infant Mawddach at Penmaenpool; but I recommend the longer one (the difference is only a couple of miles), for it

takes you by the ruins of the old abbey of Cymmer. It is one of my settled convictions as a traveller in Wales that no ruin of castle or monastery, however insignificant, ought ever to be missed, unless a visit to it would entail a considerable deviation from the route. Here, however, the ruins stand only a few hundred yards from our road. The abbey was once a small, but prosperous, Cistercian house, built in 1198, and endowed by Llewellyn the Great. Unfortunately but little of it remains; and that little has been put to base use by generations of farmers. Its situation, however, in a green meadow, through which flows the sort of clear trout stream that the old monks loved, is one of great beauty and peace, and in few places can it be more easy to dream of olden days. The spot was not always peaceful, however, for Henry I burnt much of the abbey; and near the bridge hard by a fierce contest took place between the followers of Owen Glyndwr and those of Hywel Sele.

Just beyond Cymmer we arrive at the quaint village of Llanelltyd; then turning sharply to the left we follow the course of the river, through Bontddu, down to Barmouth, eight miles away. It is a beautiful road, winding like a serpent, steep heather-clad slopes rising on the one hand, and the rapidly broadening estuary flowing on the other, and all the time the great ridge of Cader Idris towering in the distance. Charming as the lower road is, however, it is made disagreeable by the amount of motor traffic on it; and the lover of exercise, and of the high hills, who has somehow disposed of his luggage, would do well to leave the valley at Bontddu. There an ancient way (called like so many Welsh mountain tracks a Roman road!) strikes sharply up the hill-side, reaching the lower ridge of Diphwys and Llawllech, which it follows right down to the coast.

It makes a glorious walk, affording particularly fine views of the whole Cader range. Finally it emerges at the summit of the steep hill above Barmouth, a thousand feet or more above sea-level. Suddenly the blue expanse of Cardigan Bay, with its capes stretching far out, Bardsey Island on the horizon, and the great mountains of Caernarvonshire, bursts into sight; and we feel almost as the Ten Thousand did when they fell on their knees and shouted 'Thalassa! Thalassa!'

No visit to Wales would be satisfactory which did not include a pretty thorough exploration of the northern half of Cardigan Bay, that half which stretches from the estuary of the Dovey to Aberdaron. And this does not mean a rapid run by car along the coast road, with a sojourn of a few hours at two or three of the holiday resorts which extend, like pearls on a string, on its shore. The important thing to realize about this part of the bay is that it possesses a most marvellous hinterland which stretches back to a depth of from five to ten miles. The coast itself is, except for parts of the Lleyn Peninsula, decidedly inferior to that of Pembrokeshire, and even more to that of Devon and Cornwall; but its hinterland is incomparable, and nowhere else in Europe, I believe, except on the French and Italian Rivieras, in Greece, in Corsica, and where the eastern Pyrenees run into the Mediterranean, do you find such an exquisite blend of sea and mountain. There are walks on the mountains above Barmouth, and above Harlech, which only the Grande Corniche, and Mont Allegro, can rival. The view of the serried peaks of Snowdonia which one obtains from the beach near Harlech equals that of the Coolins of Skye seen across the bay. It was of this view that Hilaire Belloc wrote: 'There is no corner of Europe that I know, not even the splendid amphitheatre standing

in tiers of high Alpine wall around Udine, which so moves me with the awe and majesty of great things as does this mass of the northern Welsh mountains seen from this corner of their silent sea.'

I fear that the vast majority of visitors to the Cambrian coast almost entirely miss the beauties and the grandeur of the hinterland. One reason for that is (and this, for me and others, is its principal attraction) that there are hardly any roads better than rude cart-tracks, and often not even that, penetrating it. And so the motorist must either abandon his car and take to his legs, or else be content to return to England having seen only the edge of some of the most splendid scenery in the world. If he is a sensible man he will not hesitate, but will find a good garage for his car, shoulder his rucksack, arm himself with thick boots, a stout stick, and a good map, and make his way into the wilds with what powers of body he may possess. If he does so he will assuredly receive his reward; and it will be such a reward as no other form of wayfaring in Merionethshire and Caernarvonshire can provide.

Needless to say there is much good-natured rivalry among the many small towns and villages which lie on, or near, the coast, and it is not an easy, or a pleasant, task to assign the palm of superiority. Much depends upon personal taste, much upon the time at one's disposal. To explore the whole coast with any degree of thoroughness it is essential to have at least two centres, and to spend at least a fortnight at each. Of these centres one will have to be in Merionethshire and the other in Caernarvonshire. There can, I believe, be little doubt that the best centre in the former is Barmouth. A glance at a good map will show that it is almost equidistant from Aberdovey and Penrhyndeudraeth (the two extremities of the county); and further

BARMOUTH ESTUARY

investigations will disclose the fact that it is the natural meeting-place of roads and railways. Moreover, it is an excellent starting-point for climbs on Cader, Diphwys, Llethr, Llawllech, and the two Rhinogs. The place, which has grown in recent years from an ancient and fairly prosperous fishing village and seaport, is now a flourishing health resort, with a winter population of two thousand, and a summer one of five times that figure. Its natural setting is superb. On one side is the open sea, and on the other the estuary, about which I have already spoken. On every other side it is enclosed by mountains which rise in a perpendicular wall from the very streets. This rampart of rock effectually shelters the town from all north and east winds, leaving it open only to the balmy breezes of the south and the exhilarating storms which come from the south-west across the bay. There are few days in summer when no breeze is blowing. As for the winter climate, it is singularly equable and warm. A glance at the enormous eucalyptus-tree which grows in the street, and at the tamarisk, the geraniums, the valerian, and other semi-tropical plants which flower luxuriantly in the open air, is sufficient evidence of the absence of extreme cold. Snow falls perhaps once in ten years; and when it does it has disappeared within a few hours. The old town is very picturesque; for, starting at the quay with its ancient group of fishermen's cottages, it climbs up the steep hill-side, terrace above terrace, steps taking the place of roads. Nothing can be said about the new town of lodging-houses and shops except that it is no uglier than scores of such places in Great Britain. The sands are justly famed, stretching as they do in a great yellow crescent from Fairbourne to Harlech, a distance of ten miles. Bathing is good, but not fool-proof, and fatalities have been un-

pleasantly frequent in recent years. Ruskin was fond of Barmouth. He bought some property there, and established a branch of his Guild of St. George. Many famous personages like Darwin, Huxley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Gladstone have gone there for health and recreation. Wordsworth speaks of having 'rowed up the sublime estuary of the Mawddach'. Tennyson visited Barmouth in 1856. He was accompanied by his wife. Apparently he climbed Cader Idris, to the timid lady's no small alarm. She writes: 'I and the children waited a long time for him. I heard the roar of waters, streams, and cataracts, and I never saw anything more awful than that great veil of rain drawn straight over Cader Idris. It looked as if death were behind it, and made me shudder when I thought he was there.' One finds it difficult to believe that these groundless apprehensions were sincerely entertained by an educated woman in the decade which witnessed some of the most famous conquests of Leslie Stephen and his brother-Alpinists!

Barmouth was probably a pleasanter place in 1856 than it is now, for there is no gainsaying the fact that it is disagreeably crowded in July and August; and many of us are so constituted that we hate crowds when trying to enjoy ourselves. We feel that we see enough of masses of our fellow-men as we go to our daily work throughout the year, in the Strand, or Corporation Street, or Church Street. When holiday time arrives, what we crave for is solitude, or at most the congenial companionship of one or two intimate friends. For such persons let me recommend the neighbouring village of Dyffryn, a straggling collection of cottages bestriding the highway five miles to the north of Barmouth. As yet it has not been ' discovered ' by the crowds; and even in August only a handful of visitors will

be found there. It has some fascinating characteristics of its own. One point of superiority is the possession by it of a real village life, which goes on all the year round, and is not suspended for the supposed benefit of strangers as it is at Barmouth. It is thoroughly Welsh both in speech and customs. Needless to say, nothing in the nature of a national costume is to be seen anywhere in Wales to-day, except where it has been donned for the special purpose of facing the camera or of entertaining the foolish and ignorant. This notwithstanding, the men and women of a genuinely Welsh village could hardly be taken for anything save what they are. And Dyffryn is certainly a genuine Welsh village. Welsh is the only language spoken there, on the road, in the shops, in all places of worship, and at all meetings.

At Barmouth the mountains overhang the town, so that a stone could quite easily be dropped from the top into the streets below. But at Dyffryn the ground rises gradually, and between the sea and the first range of hills are sloping uplands three or four miles in depth. For the most part these uplands are open moorland which the walker can wander over at will. They make a delightful place for rambles, especially as they contain several lovely mountain tarns (a tarn is a *llyn* in Wales), some pretty streams, and at least two ancient stone bridges of exquisite beauty. As a platform from which to admire the bay on one side and the great mountains on the other they are simply perfect. I particularly recommend these moors above Dyffryn to that numerous class of people who are eager to walk, and can do so on fairly level ground, but are unable to climb steep ascents. Here, with the easiest of gradients, they can easily reach a height of a thousand feet, and enjoy glorious mountain prospects, mountain air,

and—what I always appreciate almost most of all—mountain smells.

The sands at Dyffryn are particularly fine, and the bathing is absolutely safe. There is, unfortunately, no boating. A great chain of dunes protects the land, which is here below the level of the sea, from the havoc which high tides would otherwise work. Behind the sand-dunes, between them and the arable land, lies a stretch of what in Welsh is called a *morfa*. It is a quarter of a mile or so in width and some four miles long. Rabbits find it a perfect paradise; and the golfer is also beginning to discover that it offers incomparably good lies. I love it because of its light springy turf which is so pleasant to walk upon, for the marvellous wealth of wild flowers with which it is clothed between May and September, for the salt pools which lie in it, where black cattle stand cooling themselves on a summer's day, and among whose reeds sea-birds build their nests and rear their young. The sea itself is hidden from sight by the sand-hills, which in places attain a tremendous height; but on the land side the view is most impressive, for the great chain of Merioneth and Caernarvonshire mountains—Cader Idris, Diphwys, Moelfre, Rhinog Bach, Rhinog Mawr, Moelwyn, Cnicht, Snowdon, Moel Hebog, the Rivals—stretching for some thirty miles, link bound to link, are in full view, the nearest of them only about five miles away. A most pleasant excursion along this *morfa* is that to Mochras, commonly known to English folk as Shell Island. An easy way of reaching this island (it is not really an island even when the tide is highest) is to take the train to the station of Pensarn and there hire a boatman to row you thither on the very beautiful estuary of the Artro. Personally, however, I prefer to walk there from Dyffryn along the *morfa*. Mochras is a delectable spot,

DYFFRYN, MOELFRE

one in which even the most energetic and impatient person might well be content to tarry for hours, and even days. The 'island' is surrounded on three sides by water, the open sea in front, across which one looks at the white houses of Criccieth, Pwllheli, and Abersoch, and the Artro estuary on the other. It is a mile or more in length, and a quarter of a mile wide, and it contains one solitary farm-house. The beach is stony, and famous for the number and variety of its shells. If I were asked to name the two most beautiful views composed of mountains and water that I have ever seen, I should, without hesitation, name the Bay of Piana in Corsica, and the Lago di Garda looked at from the Villa of Catullus at Sirmione; then I should crave leave to add as a third, not far behind the other two, the view across Cardigan Bay from Mochras on a fresh morning in summer.

By now I have referred so often to the mountains as seen from the coast that I trust the Wayfarer's appetite is properly whetted, and that he is consumed with eagerness to know them more intimately. I sympathize with him in his impatience, for I can never be at Dyffryn or one of the neighbouring villages for any length of time without feeling the irresistible call of the high hills, so mysterious, so majestic, so infinitely varied in colouring, as they beckon you on. There are three principal groups to be explored. First we have the group which lies behind the coast between Barmouth and Harlech, the best-known summits of which are Llawllech, Diphwys, Crib-y-Rhiw, Llethr, Moelfre (low, and easily climbed, yet affording magnificent views), Rhinog Bach, and Rhinog Mawr. Of these, Moelfre (1,932 ft.) is the lowest, and Llethr (2,475 ft.) the highest. Rhinog Mawr, however, though not quite so tall as Llethr (it is 2,362 ft.), is by far the noblest mountain of them all.

For cliffs comparable with those which face it on the east one must go to Cwm Dyli, or to Llyn Idwal, in the heart of Snowdonia. The second group consists of what we might call the Festiniog mountains. These run up from the coast near Portmadoc, almost at right angles to the Merionethshire mountains. The best-known summits are the triple peaks of Moelwyn (2,527 ft.), Cnicht (2,265 ft.), and the two Manods. Lastly we have the far-famed Snowdonia: Snowdon itself (3,560 ft.), Lliwedd (2,947 ft.), Crib Goch (3,023 ft.), Yr Aran (2,451 ft.), Moel Hebog (2,566 ft.), Moel Siabod (2,860 ft.), Glyder Fawr (3,426 ft.), Glyder Fach (3,262 ft.), Tryfan (3,010 ft.), Elydyr Fawr (3,029 ft.), Carnedd Dafydd (3,426 ft.), and many other summits all of them over 2,500 feet. This is the finest mountain group in the British Isles, and so well known to all walkers and climbers that it seems like an impertinence to allude to it at all.

Let us now return to our headquarters for the time being on the Merionethshire coast, be it Barmouth, Dyffryn, Llanbedr, Llanfair, or Harlech. From each of these places it is perfectly easy to explore our first group of mountains. Unfortunately exigencies of space will only allow of my mentioning a few choice routes: the reader must work them out for himself with the aid of the excellent maps and guide-books available. The following are walks and climbs which no one ought to omit.

(1) A good long day should be devoted to Llawllech, Diphwys, and Llethr. Start from Dyffryn, and ascend past the old mansion of Cors-y-Gedol, now the property of the Y.M.C.A., but formerly one of the lordly houses of Wales. Then follow a well-marked track to the right, over Pont Fadog, through the field strewn with boulders which once composed a prehistoric British camp, till you emerge on

LLANBEDR, BWLCH DRWS ARDUDWY

the open hill-side. The path still remains distinct, and you follow it straight up Llawllech to the pass known as Bwlch-y-Rhiwgyr. This is a famous view-point, worth coming to for its own sake alone. A little search will reveal a spring near the top, icy cold, and never dry in the hottest summer: a truly idyllic spot for a picnic. Llanllech runs like a mighty spine, joining on to Diphwys. It must be confessed that the walk along this ridge is somewhat tedious, for the ground is boggy, the long tough grass grows as high as your knees, and there are several very high stone walls which have to be climbed. Still it is my experience that such little inconveniences as these cease to trouble one at the intoxicating altitude of 2,400 feet. The summit of Diphwys can easily be reached in four hours; and then the climber can sit him down to enjoy a splendid scene, and to enjoy his packed lunch after what is undoubtedly a heavy morning's work. If enough energy remains, and it is summer-time, when the days are long, there stands Llethr in front, highest of them all, beckoning us to come and climb him. We follow the ridge; then unfortunately are obliged to make a considerable descent before beginning to climb Crib-y-Rhiw, the great southward bastion of our mountain. Once this bastion is surmounted the rest is child's-play, for another ridge, with a climb of two hundred feet or so, brings us to the top. The descent, which in dry weather is quite simple, should be made by the broad depression between Diphwys and Moelfre, past the little lakes of Bodlyn and Irddyn.

(2) Another day should be devoted to Rhinog Mawr, with Drws Ardudwy, the Roman Steps, and Cwm Bychan. This, without doubt, is the finest walk in these parts; and if time is short it ought to be given priority over all others. It should not, however, be attempted by anyone who is

not a good walker. A cart-road leads straight up from Dyffryn to Cwm Nantcol. After three or four miles it enters a gloomy valley, which rises rapidly, growing ever more desolate and impressive, and then contracts into the narrow defile known as Drws Ardudwy (Door of Ardudwy), which threads its tortuous way between the towering masses of Rhinog Bach and Rhinog Mawr. The last farm-house in the valley should be visited, not only because it supplies excellent refreshments but because of historic associations of peculiar interest. Its name is Maes-y-Garnedd; and in it dwelt Colonel John Jones, a famous Roundhead who became Oliver Cromwell's brother-in-law, put his signature to the death-warrant of Charles I, and later expiated that offence by the loss of his head. The stern and unbending ruggedness of Cwm Nantcol is just the sort of place that we should expect to cradle an Ironside.

From Maes-y-Garnedd fairly easy tracks lead up Rhinog Bach on the right and Rhinog Mawr on the left. The two ascents are exceedingly steep and very rough. But I am proposing that our Wayfarer should resist the temptation to make an immediate assault upon the mountains, and instead walk right through the Drws. This will add another three or four miles to the walk; but it is well worth the extra fatigue, for this pass, through which only the faintest semblance of a path runs, strewn with boulders, and often obliterated by heather and bilberry plants, is certainly one of the most magnificent in Wales. It finally emerges on to the high tableland of Trawsfynydd, the white tents of whose artillery camp are to be seen in the distance hundreds of feet below. Following the path to the left (it is very indistinct and difficult to trace), we come to the other side of Rhinog Mawr, and find ourselves in a cirque of stupendous, and wellnigh vertical, cliffs, whose serrated edges stand

ROMAN STEPS CWM-BYCHAN

out stark, like the teeth of a giant's saw, between us and the sky. Not even the precipices of the Glyders as seen from Idwal are more awe-inspiring, and I do not think it would be an exaggeration to compare them to those of Gavarnie. At first sight they would appear to be inaccessible save to experienced rock-climbers; but by keeping well to the right, and following the ridge which rises not too precipitously from our path, it is possible, with some exertion, but with no danger, to reach the summit.

I particularly recommend this route to the top of Rhinog Mawr; for in itself it is a glorious walk, and I have discovered that it is very little known. Thousands of people visit the Roman Steps every summer, and hundreds find their way to Maes-y-Garnedd; but within this mighty mountain amphitheatre, only three or four miles away, I have never met a single soul.

From the top of Rhinog Mawr it is well to return to our path; for a little farther on it becomes the justly famous Roman Steps, a marvellous flagged pathway, arranged in steps, constructed by the Roman legions, running for some two miles over the pass down to Cwmbychan Lake, and the Artro valley. Cwmbychan Lake is a mountain tarn, black as ink, out of which rises the mighty rock of Craig-y-Saeth quite perpendicularly to a height of fourteen hundred feet. I have heard competent judges declare their belief that this is the most beautiful spot in all Wales. Unfortunately its reputation has spread; and even more unfortunately there is a road by which motor-cars can reach it. My sagacious reader may well be left to draw his own conclusions! There are farm-houses in the vicinity which supply excellent tea, with home-made jam, and bread baked in the home kitchen. Then the weary traveller can get one of the motor-cars which are generally available there in

summer to carry him along the five miles of hard road down to the coast at Llanbedr. This last five miles is in itself very beautiful, for the road follows every bend of the lovely River Artro, and the village of Llanbedr is altogether delightful; but few are they who can appreciate these things after a climb up Rhinog!

These which I have just described are first-class walks, only to be attempted by seasoned pedestrians, who think nothing of doing twenty miles a day, with at least one climb of two thousand feet thrown in. But the less strenuous may well attempt them in sections. For example, no one, however modest his athletic prowess, should fail to walk from Dyffryn to Barmouth (or vice versa) over Llawllech, crossing by Bwlch-y-Rhiwgyr. Again, no one ought to miss seeing the Nantcol valley, and Maes-y-Garnedd. Up this valley, starting from Llanbedr and not from Dyffryn, there is a fairly good road, and it is possible, if not easy, for a car to go the whole way to the farm. Beyond Maes-y-Garnedd, however, there is no road. My walking friends will forgive me, I trust, for giving away this secret. After all, there are innumerable paths all around where they may roam without danger of being startled by the sound of horn and changing gear! Finally, there is the excursion to Cwmbychan and the Roman Steps. This can be accomplished directly by the quite fair road from Llanbedr. Cars can go as far as Cwmbychan Lake, and from there on to the Steps is only a couple of miles by a good path.

No account of this section of the Welsh coast would be complete without an allusion to the magnificent sunsets to be seen there. In summer the sun goes down immediately behind the low hills of the Lleyn Peninsula on the other side of the bay; and the colours of mountain, sky, and water

LLYN CWM-BYCHAN

are something that no one who has seen them is ever likely to forget.

The road north from Barmouth follows the coast, affording throughout its course magnificent and ever-changing views of sea and mountains. Ten miles from Barmouth is Harlech, famous for its castle, its battle-march, and its golf-links. No mediæval fortress in Great Britain is more picturesque in appearance, and it must have been even more imposing in the olden days when the sea washed the foot of the rock upon which it stands. Now the sea is a mile away, and the intervening *morfa* is dedicated to golf. The castle is well preserved, and is used regularly for such gatherings as the Musical Festival which is held in it once a year and the historical pageant which takes place from time to time. On such occasions the quiet little town presents an animated appearance; for thousands of people flock from every quarter to hear a Welsh choir of some twelve hundred voices rendering the native hymns and one of the classic oratorios. For a pageant no more suitable background could possibly be found; for many of the scenes acted took place long centuries ago in the old castle. Hither, in the dim ages of pre-history, came the King of Ireland to woo Bronwen, most lovely of British princesses. Here Owen Glyndwr held his parliament. Here Queen Margaret and her son Prince Edward came as fugitives during one of the periodic eclipses of the Red Rose, and were warmly welcomed and effectually protected. This, too, was the last fortress to fly the standard of King Charles I.

Harlech is a holiday-resort in a select sense. It is popular with the higher ranks of the professional classes. At Easter, or Whitsun, or in the summer vacations, you may brush shoulders at any turn of the narrow streets with bishops,

judges, famous surgeons, and head masters of public schools, not to speak of lords and ladies, many of whom have built holiday homes for themselves on the steep declivity overlooking the sea.

Through its castle Harlech links us on to ages far distant; through its College (it is called the *Coleg*) it brings us into touch with the present and the future. Coleg Harlech (to give it its official designation) is a wonderfully interesting and useful institution, which has been in existence about three years. Its purpose is to be the centre of working-class education in Wales. There is a resident staff of tutors, and the Coleg works in close association with the Welsh University, the Workers' Educational Association, the Sunday Schools, and all other educational organizations. Its tutors go out to neighbouring towns and villages to lecture and conduct classes; 'schools' are held in holiday seasons at the Coleg; and there are always a number of working-class students in residence, supported by scholarships or grants from educational bodies or unions. Up to the present Coleg Harlech has progressed steadily, and I have little doubt of its doing so in the future. Welsh people of every rank have a tremendous respect for learning. Only in Scotland and Germany, perhaps, is a well-educated man held in such veneration. Parents, in the old days of small things, were always ready to make enormous sacrifices to provide a decent education for their sons. Practically all the famous preachers of Wales in the last hundred years came from the most lowly homes. So too did great Welsh scholars like Sir Henry Jones, Sir John Rhys, and Sir O. M. Edwards. So too did great Welsh statesmen like Mr. Lloyd George. Education in Wales to-day is plentiful, and easily procured, for the rising generation. It is the privilege of Coleg Harlech to impart it to adults who, for some reason

or other, have failed to obtain higher education elsewhere, and have been compelled to go straight from a secondary school to the farm or workshop. The humanities in general are taught; and a primary position is, of course, accorded to theology, still by far the most generally popular branch of knowledge in Wales. Nor is a practical subject like agriculture neglected in the curriculum. No Wayfarer who goes to Harlech should fail to visit the Coleg. He will be warmly welcomed by the genial and youthful Warden if he shows genuine interest; and I think he will come away realizing that the true life of Wales to-day does not consist in ministering to the health and pleasure of holiday-makers.

From Harlech we travel another five miles, and come to the mouth of the beautiful Vale of Maentwrog. At all costs time must be found to deviate here from our route, and to follow the valley up to the two Festiniogs—Blaenau Festiniog, the famous town of slate quarries, and Llan Festiniog, a town which, on account of the similarity of its situation, deserves to be called the Gruyère of Wales. Poets and prose-writers have celebrated the beauties of the Vale of Maentwrog; and it deserves all the eulogistic things that they have said. Llan Festiniog is a place well suited for a prolonged stay. It stands on a commanding site, a sort of gigantic rostrum of rock, jutting out into the valley at a height of six or seven hundred feet. Great mountains encircle it on three sides, yet not so near as to give that uncomfortable feeling of confinement which spoils many places otherwise beautiful. There are woods and waterfalls, moorland and lakes, in abundance. Walks are to be found in endless variety, long ones and short ones; stiff climbs, and easy rambles on comparatively level paths. The waterfalls of the neighbourhood are among the best in Wales.

One in particular—the Cynfal Falls—is magnificent. Not only is it intrinsically beautiful, but it has associations of a romantic nature. Rising straight out of the boiling eddies is a great rock pillar, some sixty feet in height, with a flat top upon which two or three men could comfortably stand. It is not easy to climb, but the feat is possible. Here in the early years of the seventeenth century used to come Huw Llwyd, one of the last of the long line of poet-magicians who dominated Welsh life in the Middle Ages. He lived at Cynfol close by; and this great rock, ever since known as Huw Llwyd's Pulpit, was the place where he loved to meditate, and, as it was believed, hold converse with evil spirits. A belief in witchcraft was then fairly general; and Huw was credited with the possession of unusually extensive authority over the agents of the lower world. In this there was nothing incompatible with a reputation for strict morality, or even sanctity, as one of the very traditions which has been handed down shows. One day Huw was enjoying himself at a tavern in the neighbouring village of Maentwrog. Through the window he descried his friend Archdeacon Edmund Prys go by. Putting his head through the window, he warmly invited him to come in and enjoy the good cheer. The reverend man seems to have been scandalized at the thought; and to mark his displeasure he immediately caused two long horns to grow out of the luckless Huw's head, so that he was unable to withdraw it from the window. Not to be outdone, Huw, that same evening, ordered certain of the devils over whom he had control to dip the Archdeacon in the mill-stream which ran past his house. Such were the merry pranks which parsons and poets played upon each other in early seventeenth-century Wales!

As this is neither an ordinary nor a literary history of

BARMOUTH VIADUCT AND CADER IDRIS

CRICCIETH

Wales, I am saying practically nothing about the associations of places visited. Merionethshire as a whole, and particularly this coastal strip, is particularly rich in literary memories. I have just alluded to Archdeacon Edmund Prys. It was he who popularized the Reformation in Wales by writing a Welsh metrical version of the Psalms. A delightful walk of about four miles, from either Harlech or Llanbedr, brings one to *Gerddi Bluog*, the farm-house in which he lived. *Glasynys*, the home of Ellis Wynne, greatest of all Welsh prose-writers, the author of *Visions of the Sleeping Bard*, lies a few yards off the highroad between Harlech and Talsarnan. He was born there in 1671, and there the whole of his uneventful life was spent.

But we must not forget that we are still at Festiniog. Blaenau Festiniog is an interesting place too. Much quarrying has marred the beauty of the encircling hills; but it has created a highly intelligent body of inhabitants. Theology and politics are the main preoccupations of the quarrymen; and for subtle disputation, and a well-stored mind, I would back a Festiniog man against the average product of an Oxford or Cambridge college. Three railways meet at Festiniog. One is the branch line of the Great Western, about which we have already had occasion to speak, running up from Bala. The second is a branch line of the L.M.S., which comes up from Llandudno Junction by the Vale of Conway. Lastly, there is the justly popular 'toy railway', joining Blaenau Festiniog with the coast. It follows the valley of Maentwrog, clinging to the hill-side at a great altitude, and affording delightful views throughout its course.

CHAPTER VII

CAERNARVONSHIRE

RETURNING from Festiniog to the coast, and proceeding on our way, we almost immediately leave Merionethshire, and enter Caernarvonshire, its only serious rival among the counties of Wales as playground for the Wayfarer. The first place of any consequence to which we come is Portmadoc, once a busy port, whose harbour used to be full of sailing-ships, but which is now of hardly any importance from a seafaring point of view. It remains the most important gateway to Snowdonia, for the road runs from Portmadoc, through the Pass of Aberglaslyn and the village of Beddgelert, to Pen-y-Gwryd and Capel Curig. We shall return to explore this region, but before so doing let us complete our survey of the Cambrian Coast.

Who has not heard of Criccieth, the home of David Lloyd George? There are people, I am told, who feel no admiration for the famous statesman, so let me hasten to assure them that its connection with him is but one of the many charms of Criccieth! In itself it is, undoubtedly, the most beautiful place on the whole coast; and the view across the bay, beyond which the great range of Merionethshire hills stands out in bold relief, is almost unrivalled. Unlike the Merionethshire coast villages, Criccieth is far from the mountains. That gives it a more open situation, with the result that, while enjoying quite as much sunshine, the air is more bracing. The corresponding defect, of course,

OLD BRIDGE OVER RIVER SCETHIN, MERIONETHSHIRE

THE PASS OF ABERGLASYN

is that easily accessible walks are neither so numerous nor so interesting. The village itself is a gem. Its nucleus is the old ruined castle, perched on a high rock, surrounded on three sides by the sea, about which whitewashed fishermen's cottages used to cluster. Unfortunately these houses are rapidly disappearing under the joint blows of time and the sanitary inspector. But although there has been much building at Criccieth within the last thirty years, the old-world character of the place has been wonderfully well preserved. There are extensive green spaces, fields, and streets intermingling in an altogether delightful manner.

At Criccieth the coast ceases to be low and sandy, and becomes bold and rocky. The next thirty miles present a series of innumerable small bays and coves, with great cliffs against which the waves of the Irish Sea dash themselves perpetually into foam. It is a fine coast, finer far than those of Merionethshire and Anglesey. When we come to the hinterland, however, Merionethshire wins easily.

But although at Criccieth one is naturally drawn to the seashore, there are, nevertheless, many delightful walks, some along the beach in both directions, others on the tableland behind the town. It is on the edge of this tableland that Mr. Lloyd George has built his house, which stands out a prominent feature of the landscape, visible for miles around. There the ex-Premier could be seen any afternoon in summer on his veranda, indulging in the after-lunch siesta to which he himself attributes his perpetual youth. I said *could*, for he is no longer visible, having, in self-defence, been obliged to surround the house with a thick hedge and high wall to keep away the impudent tourists, who never thought that they had 'done' Criccieth until they had seen Mr. Lloyd George in his garden, and if

possible photographed him. The cobbler's cottage in which he spent his boyhood, and the only school that he ever attended, are to be seen a mile away at the exquisitely beautiful village of Llanystumdwy.

A pleasant old country lane leads off to the left, immediately opposite Mr. Lloyd George's present abode, and goes to Llanystumdwy. It runs between fields and plantations, sacred to the pheasants of a local landlord. The prospects from it are extensive, embracing the whole tremendous semicircle of mountains, from the Rivals in the north to Cader Idris in the south; while the bay beneath us, with all its capes, coves, and islands, is in full view. Llanystumdwy itself is well worth a visit. One often hears it said that Welsh villages are not beautiful, at least not in the way in which Warwickshire or Surrey villages are. For the most part I fear I must admit the truth of this. The old truly Welsh whitewashed and thatched cottages have mostly disappeared, while in their place new, and generally ugly, ones have been erected. Nothing could very easily have less architectural charm than the ordinary modern village shop, or the house to which the successful grocer or draper retires after having made his fortune. But Llanystumdwy is an exception. To begin with, it possesses tremendous assets in a swift-flowing pebbly river which runs right through the middle of the village, a most graceful stone bridge spanning it, and an ancient church. The village is built on either side of the river, and consists of grey stone cottages, in perfect harmony with their surroundings. Wales has no more precious architectural treasures than its ancient stone bridges. They are mostly of one great arch, graceful in outline, and gloriously coloured by time, as well as by the ferns and other plants which sprout from every crevice between their stones.

Criccieth is lucky in having several superb specimens of such bridges within a radius of five miles.

From Llanystumdwy it makes a pleasant walk to follow the River Dwyfor down to the sea, and then return to Criccieth along the beach. Another delightful seaside walk is that to the caves of the Black Rock. At one time smugglers used to be busy in these caves; and there is a popular belief (like so many such beliefs unverified!) that a subterranean passage leads from one of them to Bryncir, a good four miles inland. A mile or so beyond the Black Rock is the tiny church of Treflys. It is a spot of incomparable peace and beauty. There is no village anywhere near, and the dead who lie in the churchyard were brought thither from the scattered farms of a wide area. The most famous person buried there is Dafydd y Garreg Wen (David of the White Rock), the scene of whose death has been immortalized in a song as well known in England as it is in Wales.

The great tableland behind Criccieth is traversed by a veritable network of roads and lanes. Between them it is mainly peat and grazing land. It is rich in prehistoric remains in the form of dolmens or cromlechs, and antiquarians find it a happy hunting-ground. To get to the mountains it is necessary to traverse this tableland for a distance of about five miles, but with the aid of a car, or of the ubiquitous motor-bus, that is easy to do. And get there we must, for beyond we arrive at the first line of defence which Snowdon throws up between itself and the sea—a range of hills, averaging some two thousand feet in height, the king of which is Moel Hebog, and in between which lie some valleys (a *cwm*, as a narrow mountain valley is called in Wales) as beautiful as any to be found in the whole country. Of these the best worth visiting are Cwm Pennant, and Cwm Ystrallyn, the former on the north

side, the latter on the south, of Moel Hebog. A good walker can reach the top of Cwm Ystrallyn in two hours from Criccieth. It is a wild and lovely valley, with a beautiful tarn (a *llyn* in Welsh) much patronized by knowing anglers. From it a track leads over the shoulder of Hebog to Beddgelert. The entire walk from Criccieth to Beddgelert is little more than ten miles, and presents no difficulties worth speaking of. From Cwm Ystrallyn it is an easy scramble to the top of Hebog.

The beauties of Cwm Pennant have been sung, and sung worthily, by poets, and described by prose-writers, and I have no intention of entering into a hopeless competition with them. I shall confine myself to bare facts, hoping thereby to set some appreciative traveller on the right road for the enjoyment of a really first-class walk. Let him then take a bus from Criccieth and ask to be set down at the tiny hamlet of Rhoslan, four miles away. Then let him inquire the way (in Welsh, of course!) from any one of the dozen inhabitants of the place; and when he has found it, follow it for a mile till he arrives at the slightly larger hamlet of Dolbenmaen. There further inquiring as to the way is desirable, but it is really the last that he need make, and probably the last that he will have opportunity for making; for the road—soon to become a mountain path, and eventually to disappear altogether—up Cwm Pennant begins here. For about four miles the road rises steadily, past the old mansion of Bryncir, past the tiny church of Llanfihangel-y-Pennant (not to be confused with one of the same name in a remote corner of Merionethshire), past a small chapel, whose keeper will give you the final directions that you need, and so to the last farm-house in the valley. Here the *cwm* becomes a great green amphitheatre, banked on all sides, except the one by which we have come, by

NANT BRIDGE CAERNARVON

steep grassy hills, Moel Hebog all the while towering on our right, Carnedd Goch, Craig Cwm, and Trum-y-Ddysgl (all substantial mountains of over two thousand feet) on our left; and a slight depression, over which the eye of the experienced mountaineer tells him that the path must lie, right in front.

At this point the majority of visitors to Cwm Pennant from the coast turn back, and by so doing they miss the best part of the walk. At least let no reader of this book dream of doing so, for there is something even better than Cwm Pennant itself in store for him who, with stout heart and vigorous limbs, is willing to climb the steep hill-side in front until the summit of the pass is attained. The moment he sets his foot on the summit he will find himself standing on a broad ridge, with the valley which skirts the southern base of Snowdon, from Caernarvon to Beddgelert, immediately below. Across this valley, so near that even the figures of climbers on the rocks are distinctly visible, is the mighty form of Snowdon itself, clear and sheer from top to bottom. It is an unforgettable sight, for this is the only side on which Snowdon stands in lonely majesty, with no outlying hills to detract from its glory. The sight is not so fine as that on the northern side, with Crib Goch and Lliwedd making their contributions to the sublimity of the whole; but there one feels that Snowdon is only one of a family of almost equally tall and splendid brothers, while here he is alone and supreme. Turning round, and gazing to the west, we discern the whole length of the cwm by which we have come; and glistening in the far distance the silvery waters of Cardigan Bay. From our ridge the descent to Rhyd-ddu is quickly effected if the path be found and stuck to. It is not easy, however, to do the one or the other. I well remember that on the first occasion on which I did

this walk I completely lost my way, with the result that a descent which I had reckoned would take half an hour took quite three times that length of time. At Rhyd-ddu (a most uninspiring little village) you are on the highroad from Beddgelert to Caernarvon, and buses are available in both directions. You are also on the line of the Welsh Highland Railway. A three-mile walk will bring you to Beddgelert, where you can either stay or take a bus back to Criccieth. In the other direction Caernarvon lies eight miles away. Let us take a bus thither, for old Segontium well deserves a visit, if only for the purpose of seeing its castle, which is far and away the finest in Wales, if not in the British Isles.

Caernarvon, standing on the site of Roman Segontium, lies on the shore of the Menai Straits, with Anglesey immediately across the mile of intervening water. Except for its castle and its mediæval town walls, there is nothing to distinguish it from plenty of other small country towns. The streets are mean and uninteresting, and, except on market-days, or on the occasion of religious or political festivals, lacking in animation. But the castle is worth travelling far to see. It is of vast dimensions, and the exterior is almost intact. Edward I began the building of it in 1285, as a link in the chain of fortresses (the others were Beaumaris, Conway, Criccieth, Harlech, and Bere) which he designed for the final subjugation of the recalcitrant Welsh people. In the castle his son, Edward II, was born, and there may be truth in the story that he was presented, immediately after his birth, by his royal father to the Welsh people without as 'Your Prince who can speak no word of English'. It was because of this tradition that our present King consented, when he came to the throne, to have his eldest son invested as Prince of Wales

in Caernarvon Castle. Many will remember that most impressive and picturesque ceremony in 1911, when all that was most distinguished in Church and State gathered within the ancient walls; and King George V took the keys from Mr. Lloyd George, Constable of the Castle, received the homage of his son, Prince Edward, and afterwards presented him to the immense concourse of people assembled in the great square outside. It was, the Welsh people thought, an act of justice, putting an end to the evil times when the heir to the throne of England took his title from the Principality, yet never bothered to set foot on its soil. May we hope that the splendid pageant of 1911 will be re-enacted on every such occasion in the future!

Express trains take one rapidly from Caernarvon to Chester; but we must turn in the opposite direction and explore the Lleyn Peninsula, the 'Land's End' of North Wales. With that purpose in view I should suggest that a bus be taken from Caernarvon either to Nevin on the north coast, or to Pwllheli on the south, and that one or other of those places should be made our headquarters. On the way to either of them let us contrive to pass through Clynnog Fawr, for the little hamlet possesses a glorious church, far finer than any of the Welsh cathedrals. Leland called it 'the fayrest Church yn ol Caernarvonshire', and if he had said 'in all Wales' he would have been guilty of no exaggeration. The church was founded by St. Beuno, about the year 616, at first as a monastic, but later as a collegiate, institution. Not much of the original structure remains; the greater part of the present building—an excellent example of late Perpendicular, with remarkably fine windows—dating from the sixteenth century. As this is not a hand-book to architecture, nor even a guide-book, I must not dilate upon the many points of interest which

Clynnog displays. Three curious objects I must, however, mention. The first is an old chest bound with iron, strong almost as a modern safe. In it used to be kept the proceeds of the sale of all lambs and calves born with 'St. Beuno's Mark.' These animals were offered by the neighbouring farmers to the Saint on Trinity Sunday. The second curiosity is an 'Elor Feirch', or Horse Bier. Many, if not the majority, of farms in the mountainous parts of Wales had no sort of road leading to them that wheeled vehicles could use; and they might be situated half a dozen miles from the nearest churchyard. The dead could not be borne so far on men's shoulders; and so this kind of bier was invented to be carried on the backs of horses. A few of them survive, though of course no longer in use, and are to be seen in some of the more remote churches. Lastly there is an 'Efail Gwn', or Dog Tongs, a formidable instrument employed by the sexton for expelling quarrelsome dogs from the sacred precincts when they showed a disposition to disturb public worship. In bygone days every farmer brought his dog with him to church; and the animals sat in the pews with their masters all through the service. As a rule all would be well, but occasionally an evil spirit would enter into one of the dogs, and a broil would ensue. It was on such occasions that the tongs were brought to bear upon the offender. Sometimes, however, the lust of battle would be communicated by the dogs to their owners. There is a true, and amusing, story about a country church in which something of that sort took place. The parson had brought his own dog Tango with him, and he sat as usual curled on the floor beside the lectern. As ill luck would have it, just as the vicar began to read the prayers, a neighbouring farmer's dog made a fierce onslaught on Tango, and battle was instantaneously

CAERNARVON CASTLE

joined. At first the parson frowned; then he got interested, then excited, until finally, unable to restrain himself any longer, he shouted, 'Three to one on Tango.' In those days there were yet sporting parsons in the land!

We are now on the 'Saints' Road', the highway by which pilgrims used to travel to the sacred wells of Lleyn, and on to Bardsey, the holy island. One of these sacred wells, dedicated to St. Beuno, lies just outside the village of Clynnog. It has stone benches, steps leading down into the water, and all the other paraphernalia with which mediæval superstition used to equip such resorts. As we look with a half-pitying smile at these trappings, can we escape an uneasy thought as to what our descendants, five hundred years hence, will be saying about our twentieth-century Harrogate, Baden, and Aix-les-Bains? Pennant, who visited Clynnog as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, tells us that he saw in the church 'a feather-bed on which a poor paralytic from Merionethshire had lain the whole night, after ablutions in the neighbouring well'. Faith, we know, does work wonders; and the healing properties of fresh clean water are not to be despised. A friend of mine was boastfully told by a cultivated Italian, only a few months ago, that he had a bath twice a year 'whether he needed it or not'! What the condition of affairs must have been in bathless mediæval Wales it is horrible to think. Let us at least be thankful that these sacred wells of Caernarvonshire attracted thousands of pilgrims every year!

Nevin is a pleasant little fishing village, with an old-time air, perched on the summit of steep cliffs above the sea, and under the shadow of the Rivals, the twin peaks of the highest mountain in this comparatively flat region. The name Rivals has nothing to do with a competition between

these two peaks, but is simply a corruption of the real Welsh name—Yr Eifl. It is well worth climbing, for although in altitude it is only about 1,450 feet, it has majestic cliffs on one side descending almost sheer into the sea; while the remoteness of its position from all other hills that might obstruct the view makes it an admirable platform. From the summit can be seen the whole of Cardigan Bay from Bardsey to St. David's· Caernarvon Bay in its entirety, with the gigantic Penmaenmawr bounding the horizon; the whole of Anglesey; and practically all the peaks of Snowdonia, as well as the Merionethshire mountains. Antiquarians visit the Rivals in order to examine Tre-y-Ceiri, now a shapeless mass of ruins, but revealing to the discerning eye the outlines of a fortified prehistoric town of immense size. It contains more than a hundred of the round stone huts, called *cutiau* in Welsh, and assigned by Boyd Dawkins to the Iron Age. What a site for a town it was! Why, not even Fiesole or Eze can rival it.

The road from Nevin to Pwllheli traverses the Lleyn Peninsula in almost a straight line. It forms the base of a triangle, whose apex is Aberdaron. In itself Pwllheli is uninteresting enough, and I have even known people to call it ugly. Such persons, however, can only have motored hurriedly through its narrow, winding streets; they cannot have strolled on the beach on a clear day, and regarded the marvellous panorama of mountains spread out in a mighty horseshoe more than fifty miles in extent; nor can they have climbed the hill behind the town on an autumn evening, and watched the setting sun turn the harbour and the Gimlet Rock into a great mass of molten gold. The bathing is first rate; to vouch for which we have the testimony of such a connoisseur as James Bryce, a man who prided himself upon having bathed in every ocean,

and in most seas, in the world. When on a visit to Transylvania, in company with Leslie Stephen, in 1866, we find him writing home to his mother: 'I find myself in this enervating heat, where the huge plain is watered only by a sluggish, muddy stream like the Maros here, realizing with painful intensity the fresh streams of Arran, or the delights of a plunge in Cardigan Bay on Pwllheli strand.' Moreover, Pwllheli is an excellent place in which to study native life, for it is Welsh of the Welsh. Serving as it does a great agricultural area, its market-days and its fairs are still things of consequence. On the two 'Hiring Fairs' the green is alive with farmers with their wives, and young girls and young men expecting to be engaged as dairy-maids or farm labourers.

From Pwllheli, or from Nevin, Lleyn can easily be explored by means of motor-bus, car, or bicycle. It is not good walking country, for unlike most of North Wales it is comparatively flat; and as every inch of ground is under cultivation, the same freedom to trespass is not allowed. If walk we will, we shall have to do so on roads. Nor is the scenery particularly interesting. It is a country of big farms, with fields of waving corn, and pasture-lands upon which are bred the excellent black cattle for which Wales is so famous. The coast, however, is very fine. It is rocky and indented with scores of little bays and coves, ideal spots for a picnic at the end of a good tramp along the cliffs. For the most part the inhabitants of North Wales have not been a seafaring folk. Unlike their kinsmen in Cornwall and Brittany, they have not been keen fishermen or enterprising traders. They have rather turned their eyes to the hills, and farming has been their avocation. Around the coast of Caernarvonshire, however, the fishing industry and a small coasting trade have always flourished. Port-

madoc, Pwllheli, Abersoch, Aberdaron, Nevin, Caernarvon, Port Dinorwig, Conway, and Deganwy, have all, at one time or another, been busy little ports, and have always possessed a fleet of fishing-boats.

Unfortunately there is no road by which we can travel round Lleyn, enjoying the beauty of the coast while avoiding the unattractive inland parts. The roads run like a spine through the interior, sending out offshoots which run down to the many coves on which hamlets or isolated farms are situated. From Pwllheli to Abersoch, however, we are never for long out of sight of the sea. Once upon a time Abersoch must have been an exceedingly picturesque place; and even now, with its incomparable view of Cardigan Bay, which from this point resembles a great lake rather than an arm of the sea, with St. Tudwal's Island and its white lighthouse in the foreground, it is possessed of considerable attraction. But it has paid the price of popularity, and is rapidly being disfigured by ugly bungalows, and by even uglier holiday mansions of the very rich. At Barmouth, or Aberdovey, or Harlech, crowded with pleasure-seekers as they are, it is easy to escape in ten or twenty minutes into the unbroken solitude of the high hills. But at Abersoch there is no escape possible; for the hinterland is uninviting, and all are compelled to huddle close together on the beach. It must be said, however, that there are within easy reach some exquisite coves where, at all times save at the height of the summer season, perfect quiet can be found for those persons (and I reckon every sensible Wayfarer among them) who do not want to have the music of the waves and the sea birds disturbed by human voices, and who do not want to be too rudely reminded of the existence of towns by finding old copies of the *Birmingham Post* scattered about the beach!

Among all places in Lleyn my choice would fall upon Aberdaron. Yet I almost dread to say it; for such divine spots are now rare, and I do not wish my conscience to be burdened with the responsibility of having sent as many as half a dozen visitors, not quite of the right sort, to spoil its charm. Let me preface my remarks by saying that for the motorist Aberdaron is hopelessly bad, that the beach is unfit for children, that there are no entertainments of even the village cinema type, that there is no golf, that there are practically no shops, and that in the popular sense there is absolutely nothing to do; and if that catalogue of negatives does not keep away undesirables I don't know what will! What, then, is there at Aberdaron? Well, there is almost everything that the lover of fine seascapes delights in. It is almost at the extremity of Lleyn, and completely hidden away from sight. The road thither follows a high tableland, until quite suddenly it begins to descend to sea-level by a tremendously steep hill. At the bottom, cut off from the land almost as effectively as Frutuoso, is a small bay, with a pebbly beach half a mile long, bounded at each end by towering rocks which stretch far out into the sea. Behind one of these capes, and out of sight, lies Bardsey, the Holy Isle. Right on the shore, huddled closely together, are the diminutive church and the few fishermen's cottages which constitute the village of Aberdaron. There is no hotel, but plain and comfortable lodging may be obtained at either of two small inns. Here we are seventeen miles from the nearest railway, and until quite recently the only means of conveyance were the market-carts which plied occasionally between it and Pwllheli. Now, however, for good or evil, motor-buses run regularly between Pwllheli station and Aberdaron, making it possible to visit the place in the course of a single

day. Yet the sense of desolation remains unbroken; and we do not wonder that, when the rebel Percy Hotspur and Owen Glyndwr wanted to hatch treason against their king, they should choose this lonely spot for a meeting-place. Here was born, in 1780, the queer character known as Dick Aberdaron. He was a professional Wayfarer, sometimes called tramp, and a self-taught linguist of quite phenomenal attainments. It is alleged that he knew thirty-five languages. The depth of his knowledge we have no means of ascertaining, but we do know that he compiled a dictionary in Welsh, Greek, and Hebrew. Unfortunately this celebrity is not buried, as I am sure he would have wished to be, in the wave-washed churchyard of his native village, but lies far away at St. Asaph.

No one must dream of leaving Aberdaron without having walked the two and a half miles along the headland of Braich-y-Pwll, in very sooth the 'Land's End' of Wales. Like its confrère in Cornwall and the Pointe du Raz in Brittany, it is a romantic spot, where the breaking of huge waves upon the black rocks keeps up an incessant roar. At the very extremity, always moistened by the salt spray, are the ruins of an ancient church dedicated to Mary; and below, accessible only when the tide is out, is a wishing-well. Here the innumerable pilgrims on their way to Bardsey were wont to assemble, and to wait for boats to carry them across the two miles of stormy and treacherous channel to the Holy Isle.

It is not always possible to visit Bardsey even in these days of improved navigation, for the seas about it are apt to run high, so that landing, except in calm weather, is out of the question. Only last winter the island was cut off for upwards of a month from all communication with the mainland. The forty inhabitants received their Christ-

mas mail late in January, and it was only then that the single shopkeeper of the island, who had been weather-bound at Pwllheli since December 17th, was able to return to his home. Naturally the islanders prepare themselves for the possibility of such periods of isolation. Large stocks of provisions are laid in. This last winter, however, I am told that the supply of yeast, tea, and sugar had run out, and that the men were obliged to take to smoking tea-leaves, which they had saved and dried, in lieu of tobacco! It is an interesting little community, composed entirely of crofters, with the addition of a Free Church minister and his wife, who is schoolmistress-general for the island. The wireless has now done something to mitigate the loneliness of the inhabitants, but they remain, and wish to remain, a people apart. Can we wonder at their preference when we learn that they pay neither taxes nor rates? In case of real distress, such as a serious illness or a death or shortage of provisions, there is an understanding between them and the people of the mainland, with whom they keep up communication by means of fires.

It is well worth making the effort to see Bardsey. Pwllheli or Aberdaron boatmen are almost always willing (for a consideration!) to try to take you there. The island is only four hundred and forty acres in area. Its inhabitants, ranging between forty and fifty, are farmers, and governed patriarchally by a 'king'. In addition to a few cottages there is a fine lighthouse, and at the northern extremity, rising five hundred feet sheer out of the sea, are the ruins of an abbey, said to have been founded by St. Cadvan in A.D. 516. Apparently Bardsey, from time immemorial, has been thought of as a holy island. Merlin is said to have gone thither with the Thirteen Treasures of Britain. We have already seen how the fugitives from Bangor Iscoed, when

that flourishing monastic foundation was looted by the pagan king of Mercia, sought for safety there. Throughout the Middle Ages Bardsey was one of the most popular resorts of pilgrims in Western Europe. It was known as the 'Rome of Britain' and as the 'Gate of Paradise'. Three pilgrimages to Bardsey had the efficacy of one to Rome. Most desirable of all was it to die there. The old and decrepit flocked thither, and tradition has it that twenty thousand saints lie buried in the island.

Snowdonia

Although there are a few spots in the Cader range and among the Rhinogs of equal grandeur, most people would admit that Snowdon, with its attendant peaks, constitutes the innermost shrine of the Welsh mountains. It has always been so. When Norman, Angevin, and Plantagenet invaders had overrun all the lowlands and the more fertile hill country, the great fastnesses of Eryri (Home of the Eagles) remained as the last citadel of native independence. When, in the middle years of the nineteenth century, mountain- and rock-climbing became a craze, Peny-g-wryd soon developed into the Mecca of all votaries of the rope and the ice-axe. Thither, every year, came C. E. Mathews, of Mont Blanc fame. Thither, on December 26, 1860, came the celebrated scientists, Tyndall and Huxley, to perform a climb which is delightfully described in the former's classic *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*. Charles Kingsley was a frequent visitor; and nowhere has such justice been done to the scenery as in his *Two Years Ago*. In all mountain literature is there anything finer than his description of a storm on the Glyder? To Pen-y-gwryd also came famous Swiss guides, the honoured guests of English climbers who had profited

SNOWDON, FROM BWLCH GLAS

by their services in the Alps: Gabriel Taugwalder of Zermatt, Aloys Supersaxo of Saas, and, greatest of all, Melchior Anderegg of Meiringen. It is no exaggeration to say that every English climber of note in the last seventy years, from Leslie Stephen half a century ago to Winthrop Young and Mallory in our own day, has been a frequent visitor to Snowdonia; and the two inns—Pen-y-Gwryd and Pen-y-Pass—have won fame little short of that of the Wengern Alp or the Eggishorn. Long may they continue to enjoy it!

Most unfortunately Snowdonia is supplied with an over-abundance of roads, which enable the motorist to come a great deal nearer the central sanctuary than is good for himself or pleasant for others. Nevertheless, there is a barrier beyond which he cannot pass; and within it only those choice spirits who have the freedom of the high hills may roam. Alight from your car at Quellyn, or Pen-y-Gwryd, or Pen-y-Pass, or Ogwen Cottage, and half an hour's brisk climb will bring you to spots where the motor-horn has given place to the bleat of the mountain sheep, and the raucous cacophony of engines been superseded by the musical sound of rushing water. True, there is a railway up Snowdon, and that nice folk will do well to abandon its summit to the vulgar hordes who make use of it during the middle part of every week-day between late June and early September. But then, is there not a railway up the Jungfrau, up the Zugspitze, and up the Aiguille du Midi? No, when fastidious persons have growled their worst, the fact remains that the great mountains, even the less great ones of Wales, are not easily spoilt by the fact of a few thousand trippers going up and down Snowdon by train. Indeed, there is a sense in which the railway performs an actual service: it concentrates all the people on one route, leaving

every other part as private as a king's garden. We ought also to feel grateful to the owners of the Snowdon railway for selecting what is, beyond doubt, the ugliest way up the mountain! All the finest paths are to-day, as they have always been in the past, completely solitary and unspoilt.

Moreover Snowdon, though by some little the highest, and without question the most shapely, mountain in the group, is only one of many; and on the others—Lliwedd, Crib Goch, the two Glyders, Siabod, Tryfan, and the Carneddau—only good walkers and lovers of the mountains will be encountered. Tryfan is for rock-climbers only; but all the others provide endless excursions for the pedestrian of moderate powers. Needless to say there are ample opportunities for accidents, even fatal ones, and the Wayfarer would do well to consult a reliable guide-book before selecting his route, and to pay due regard to the weather. A real climber thinks nothing of doing the Crib Goch–Snowdon–Lliwedd Horseshoe, of scaling the perpendicular rocks of Tryfan, or of descending from the Glyder Mawr to Llyn Idwal through the Devil's Kitchen; but let all inexperienced walkers beware: such places are not to be treated disrespectfully, and the punishment which they inflict upon the careless and ignorant is sometimes terrible. Everywhere on Lliwedd, Crib Goch, Snowdon itself, the Glyder Mawr, and Tryfan, are to be found rock climbs which tax the capabilities of the most seasoned mountaineer. This, in fact, is one of the glories of Snowdonia—that it provides an almost inexhaustible variety of walks and climbs suitable, at one end of the scale, for the man who is nothing more than a good walker, and at the other end worthy of the attention of the climbers of Mount Everest.

It is not my intention to describe either walks or climbs,

for all information with regard to them is fully set forth in the many excellent guide-books to the region. But a few general remarks with regard to the choice of centre may be of use.

Take your map of Caernarvonshire and draw a line from Criccieth to Penrhyndeudraeth, another from Penrhyndeudraeth to Festiniog, a third from Festiniog to Bangor, and a fourth from Bangor to Criccieth, and within that rectangle lie the mountains of Snowdonia. They may be approached from four points. The ordinary railways will take you to Portmadoc, or Bettws-y-Coed, or Caernarvon, or Bangor—all of them convenient places from which to start. It is also easy nowadays to perform the remainder of the journey by motor-bus. The road from Portmadoc runs through the beautiful Pass of Aberglaslyn to Beddgelert (so inappropriately called by the foolish 'the Grindelwald of Wales'), then up Nant Gwynant, and so to Pen-y-Gwryd. From Bettws-y-Coed the road, passing close by the celebrated Swallow Falls, proceeds to Capel Curig, and then to Pen-y-Gwryd. From Bangor the great Holyhead road traverses the sublime Nant Ffrancon Pass to Ogwen, then on to join the Bettws road at Capel Curig. From Caernarvon a branch railway goes as far as Llanberis. The latter place was, at one time, a beautiful little town, but it has largely been disfigured by quarrying. It is the starting-point of the Snowdon Mountain Railway, and of what is by far the dullest and the easiest path to the summit. Beyond the town the road enters the wild Pass of Llanberis, and for half a dozen miles threads its way between the towering masses of Crib Goch and Glyder Mawr. At the top of the pass stands the Pen-y-Pass (or Gorphwysfa) Hotel, and a quarter of a mile down on the other side Pen-y-Gwryd.

It will be seen from the above remarks that I regard

Pen-y-Gwryd and Pen-y-Pass (they are only a quarter of a mile apart) as the central points of the Snowdon circle, and as the best places from which to explore all the valleys and peaks within walking compass. Ogwen Cottage lies on the northern circumference of the circle, and is only to be recommended to people who intend to concentrate upon the Carneddau, Tryfan, and the Glyders. Beddgelert, though a most charming little village and a wonderfully good centre for walks, is too far from the big mountains. The same may be said about Llanberis, and about the two inns to be found in the neighbourhood of Quellyn. Capel Curig is altogether delightful, and for views quite unequalled; but it is a good four miles from our base of operations if we would climb Snowdon, or the Glyders, or Tryfan. It is, however, very convenient for Moel Siabod. Moreover, it possesses a really first-class hotel.

All things considered I have no hesitation in suggesting either Pen-y-Gwryd or Pen-y-Pass as the best place in which to settle down. The former stands at an elevation of nine hundred feet, and the latter at between eleven and twelve hundred. From their very doors paths lead straight on to the Glyders, Siabod, Crib Goch, Snowdon, and Lliwedd, so that the gilt is taken off no walk by a dull piece of hard road. With more distant points, such as Ogwen in the north and Quellyn in the south, they are connected by a good motor-bus service. Moreover (and perhaps most important of all!), the two inns are wellnigh perfect of their kind. They are well built and well furnished, while the food is abundant and excellent. Best of all, by far the greater number of the guests who frequent them are of the right sort. One wears one's shabbiest clothes even for evening dinner; while all the talk is of chimneys, coulôirs, *séracs*, and other mysterious things whose names are music

CAPEL CURIG

to the ear of the true climber. Whether it be at Christmas, when snow lies thick around, or on a broiling August day, there will always be good company there; and we shall be unlucky if we do not find ourselves sharing the cosy little lounge with at least one man famous for his exploits in the Alps, the Andes, or the Himalayas. An occasional motorist looks in, but he is very much like a fish out of water. Up to the present both Pen-y-Gwryd and Pen-y-Pass have had the good sense to realize that their strength lies in the preservation of their distinction in being true climbers' hostels. So long as they so remain, climbers and walkers will remain faithful to them; but let them begin to burn incense to the motor tourist and the dress shirt and their glory will very soon be a thing of the past.

Pen-y-Gwryd has had a great history, for it was first in the field, and so attracted to itself the first big invasion of enthusiastic mountaineers. For many years, under the direction of its famous host and hostess, Mr. and Mrs. Owen, it was the resort of every British climber. Old Harry Owen was as famous in his day as Mr. Seiler, who was performing the same work at Zermatt. In the inn hall stands a case full of mountaineering books placed there by members of the Climbing Club in memory of C. E. Mathews. Hard by are shelves displaying a goodly array of nailed boots, ropes, and ice-axes—tangible reminders of the fact that we have come to a place where the main business of life is climbing.

Kingsley has left us a memorable description of Pen-y-Gwryd as it used to be: 'It was a low room, ceiled with dark beams, from which hung bacon and fishing-rods, harness and drying stockings, and all the miscellanea of a fishing inn kept by a farmer, and beneath it the usual happy, hearty harvest group. There was Harry Owen, bland and stalwart; his baby in his arms, smiling upon the

world in general; old Mrs. Pritchard bending over the fire, putting the last touch to one of those miraculous *soufflés*, compact of clouds and nectar, which transport alike palate and fancy at the first mouthful from Snowdon to Belgrave Square.' And C. E. Mathews himself writes: 'How well I remember Harry Owen doing Punch for his children in the same old kitchen, Mrs. Owen knitting in the corner, and the collie dogs lying on the floor. No hot whisky was ever so delicious as that which we drank over the peat fire, while the wind was howling or the rain was beating outside. No talk was ever more manly, no friendships were ever more sincere. Alas, the old kitchen, where so many honest men spent such happy hours, has been converted into a bar. Half the charm of Pen-y-Gwryd lies buried with the Owens in Beddgelert churchyard.' Those of us who are too young ever to have known Harry Owen still find Pen-y-Gwryd charming. Gone is the old kitchen, and with it the peat fire, and much of the old friendliness between host and guests. The little inn has grown in size; there is electric light and hot running water. But the charm of simplicity remains. In Great Britain at least there is no place more worthy of the love of a genuine Wayfarer.

But let no one be deterred from visiting Snowdonia by the belief that it is for great climbers, and for them only. Climbing there is, of course, in abundance, but there are also multitudes of first-rate walks; and it may safely be said that all that is most beautiful and grand in the district can be seen without putting life or limb into the slightest peril. Cwm Dyli, lying between Lliwedd and Crib Goch, with Snowdon closing its upper end, with its stupendous cliffs, and the two exquisite tarns—Llydaw and Glaslyn—is easily accessible by a very rough mountain road fit only for pedestrians. Cwm Glas Mawr, on the northern side of

Crib Goch, high above the Pass of Llanberis, without doubt the finest cwm in the whole range, entails a stiffer climb, and requires a more steady head; but a walker of average powers need not fear it in the least. Idwal and Bochlwyd, two tiny tarns, black as ink, above which rise the awe-inspiring precipices of the Glyders, can easily be reached from the main road near Ogwen by any person who is not afraid of wet feet. The worst foe of the pedestrian in Snowdon is, perhaps, the boggy nature of so much of the ground. Moel Siabod, for example, is an easy mountain to climb; and it is well worth climbing, but all its lower slopes are apt to be terribly marshy even in the driest weather, with the result that long detours have to be made and walking becomes exceedingly laborious. Up all the highest peaks—Snowdon, the two Glyders, Siabod, and the Carneddau—there are comparatively easy routes, usually well indicated by small cairns, as well as paths which test the science of the mountaineer. With Lliwedd, Crib Goch, and Tryfan it is otherwise. They are precipitous, and no one who has any tendency to giddiness ought to attempt them without the aid of a thoroughly experienced and reliable companion.

My own favourite route up Snowdon is that called the Pyg Track, a path which leads off the main road immediately opposite the Pen-y-Pass inn, soon crosses a lower shoulder of Crib Goch, and emerges into Cwm Dyli, high above Llydaw and Glaslyn. It then zigzags up the steep eastern side of Snowdon, joining eventually the popular Llanberis path a few hundred yards below the summit. Doubtless people will always quarrel about the top of Snowdon. To many the wooden shanty in which refreshments are there served is an unspeakable abomination, an insult to the majestic mountain whose summit it disfigures. For this

view there is much to be said. I cannot, however, find it in my heart to be very severe in the matter, for have I not, time and again, gone from the dense and chilly mist of the mountain into the delightful warmth of the great stove which is always burning within the hut? And have I not drunk cup after cup of the steaming coffee which is provided there, and which every fair-minded man must allow to be very comforting after the long and steep climb from Pen-y-Pass? No, I am not prepared to vote for the abolition of the Snowdon summit 'hotel'!

Another magnificent excursion is to climb the Glyder Fach by the path which leaves the Capel Curig road a few score yards beyond Pen-y-Gwryd, and to scramble down the northern slope to the foot of Tryfan, descending thence to the road at Ogwen past Llyn Bochlwyd. No ramble gives a better idea of the peculiar beauties of the district. It also affords the opportunity of studying the extraordinary form of Tryfan from every possible angle.

If our Wayfarer happens to be staying at Capel Curig, he has at his door a wide range of delightful walks in the district which lies between the Ogwen valley and the Conway valley. An excellent tramp may be made from Capel Curig to the once popular and fashionable spa of Trefriw, or to the old market-town of Llanrwst, passing on the way the lovely lake of Crafnant. A round walk may be made of it by bearing to the right near Crafnant, passing the lake of Geirionydd, and arriving ultimately at Bettws-y-Coed. In any case Bettws, of course, must be visited. To those who love river, woodland, and hill country in their perfection it will appeal strongly. Artists have always delighted in it, and the picture galleries of our big towns abundantly reflect its glories. But it must be admitted that in these days, when stuffy valleys are less in favour than

LLYN IDWAL

bleak mountain tops, Bettws has fewer ardent admirers than used to be the case. It is enervating, and not well adapted to be a centre for the vigorous pedestrian. For the motorist, however, Bettws has many advantages. Its hotels are numerous, large, and good. Several roads converge there, and from it a considerable slice of North Wales can be most conveniently explored.

If possible, let your departure from Snowdonia be by the Capel Curig road, for just as you turn the last corner before entering the Llugwy valley you will, if the day is one of average clearness, catch a glimpse of the great mountains which you are never likely to forget. From this standpoint Snowdon, Crib Goch, and Lliwedd, all with cone-shaped summits, stand out clearly against the sky, a mighty trinity whose base is one. When the winter sun lights upon their snow-capped peaks they present a scene which can, I think, without exaggeration be compared with the unforgettable vision of giants of the Valais as seen from the highest point of the Gemmi Pass.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NORTH WALES COAST

WE have now left the mountains behind us, and are bound for the coast. Our road runs past Llyn Ogwen, affording a last glimpse of Tryfan and the cliffs of Glyder. We travel down Nant Francon, through Bethesda (the rival of Festiniog as a slate-quarrying centre), and so to Bangor. In North Wales there are no towns in the true sense of the term, but only overgrown villages and health resorts. Bangor, though an ancient cathedral city and the home of a flourishing University, has only eleven thousand inhabitants, and is as ugly and uninviting a place as could very well be imagined. Even the cathedral is totally lacking in distinction. Gilbert Scott, when he came to 'restore' it in 1866, declared that he found it to be 'almost a by-word, no cathedral in the United Kingdom being equal to it in meanness'. I have not seen all the cathedrals of Britain, but it would surprise me to hear that Scott's verdict required any modification to-day.

The only building of any note in Bangor is the University College. This occupies a commanding position on the hill known as Upper Bangor. The Welsh University is composed of four constituent colleges, respectively situated at Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, and Bangor. The last-named has been in existence since 1884, though the present buildings were only erected in 1911. In the close upon fifty years of its history Bangor College has splendidly served the needs

of North Wales in higher education. Scholars of great distinction, like Henry Jones the philosopher, Arnold the Latin scholar, and John Morris Jones, greatest of Welsh philologists, have been among its teachers. The undergraduates number about five hundred; and there are the usual faculties of science and arts, as well as theology, music, forestry, agriculture, and engineering. Wales is proud of its colleges. To-day they receive fairly generous support from the State, and occasionally a munificent donor comes to their aid. But in early days they were essentially democratic institutions. Literally they were built with the pennies of the peasantry. For the Welsh people have always put education next to religion among their interests. After the preaching meeting came in popularity a contest between bard, musician, and essayist. At one time those things were confined to the Eisteddfod, but by degrees the centre of gravity, and even poetical inspiration, seems to have shifted to the college lecture room.

From Bangor one looks right across the Menai Straits—in places only some two hundred yards wide—to Anglesey. Welshmen would be horrified if I were to pass by the island-county without mention, for it delights in the name 'Mother of Wales', and has produced far more than its share of the great poets, preachers, and scholars of the country. Its inhabitants form an intensely conservative community, agricultural for the most part, with an accent and customs all their own. There are no mountains, if we except the two hills, neither of them rising to a height of a thousand feet, which dominate the landscape. Neither is there much waste land. Fertile fields comprise practically the whole island. Now this is undoubtedly conducive to good farming, but it does not appeal particularly to the Wayfarer, or

compensate him for the absence of interesting buildings and fine scenery. The best thing about Anglesey is the magnificent view of the Caernarvonshire mountains which one obtains by using it as a platform! Neither is its coastline entirely without distinction. It is indented with many little bays of considerable charm, though one misses the bold headlands of Lleyn or Pembrokeshire. Let the truth be spoken, though the heavens fall! Anglesey is dull, and with the greatest cheerfulness I consign it to its patriotic inhabitants, who have succeeded in preserving it as a citadel of the Welsh spirit, and to the bungalow owners from Lancashire, who flock thither in ever-increasing numbers to bathe and play golf. Verily it is a country with which the Wayfarer need not greatly concern himself.

Telford's great Suspension Bridge, built between 1819 and 1826, over the Menai Straits is well worth a visit. When it was erected stage-coach traffic was at its height, and the Holyhead road had to be carried across the waters of Menai. With that purpose this powerful, but wonderfully graceful, bridge was planned. The books inform us that it is still the longest suspension bridge in the United Kingdom. It is so high that the tallest masts of steamers can pass beneath it quite easily. Less beautiful, though not less wonderful as a feat of engineering, is the neighbouring Britannia Tubular Bridge, through which the railway is carried across the Straits. This was built by Robert Stephenson between 1846 and 1850.

Returning from our brief visit to Anglesey, we pursue our way along the coast in the direction of Chester. For many people, I suppose, this bit of coast stands for Wales; for are not Llandudno, Colwyn Bay, Rhos-on-Sea, Penmaenmawr and Rhyl situated upon it? Let it be allowed that the scenery here is good, even very good. The mighty headlands

of Penmaenmawr and the Great Orme are not markedly inferior in majesty to the Portofino Kulm, or to the rugged buttresses which protect the west of Ireland from the terrific rollers of the Atlantic. The breezes which blow in from the Irish Sea are invigorating in the extreme. Deganwy is not easy to surpass, either in Wales or anywhere else, in picturesque beauty, and it scosmopolitan seafaring life is full of interest. Conway is a magnificent specimen of a fortified mediæval town, and demands the most careful study. Here, however, I feel that my praise must end. Nature has done much for this coast, but its lavish gifts have been largely spoilt by man. There are hideous quarries in the neighbourhood of Penmaenmawr, so conspicuously situated that to avoid seeing them is wellnigh impossible. Everywhere there are countless jerry-built houses and bungalows and hotels which, though comfortable and convenient enough in all probability, are the last word in ugliness. Llandudno is overrun by the cheapest and most objectionable type of tripper to a degree that is simply horrible, and is quite intolerable save in the quietest months of the winter. Worst of all is the fact that this coast is in no sense any longer Wales. Geographically it remains part of the Principality; actually it is just a bit of Lancashire or the Midlands. Let no one say that he has been to Wales when all he means is that he has spent a few days at one of these north coast resorts. Of course we can, by the aid of a car, escape into the mountains, which lie only a few miles inland; but my advice is: stay among the mountains themselves, or at one of the truly Welsh resorts on Cardigan Bay, and leave these 'go-ahead' places to the tens of thousands who presumably enjoy them.

CHAPTER IX

THROUGH MID-WALES

OUR wanderings have now taken us through the greater part of what is strictly North Wales. The rest of the country is made up of some five counties to which the name South Wales can definitely be given, and a middle region, consisting principally of Montgomeryshire, which does not entirely belong to either of the big divisions. Now this common division of Wales into two halves is much more than a paper one: it has its roots in past history; and that history, in turn, is partly grounded on geographical distinctions. North Wales is a region of great mountains and bleak moorlands. There are few fertile valleys and no navigable rivers. Nor is there a single large town. In the southern counties, on the other hand, there are some tall hills, but their smooth and rounded forms make them truly hills, and not mountains. Valleys are numerous, broad, and fertile. There are considerable rivers, like the Wye, the Towy, and the Teifi. Large areas are devoted to mining and industry, and there are a few very large towns. Its inhabitants would claim that it is as beautiful as the North, but to such a verdict I, for one, would strongly demur. Beauties South Wales unquestionably possesses—lovely valleys, a rugged coastline, and fine open moorlands; but to suggest that there is anything within it comparable with the estuaries and hills of Merioneth, with the mountains of Caernarvon, or with the glories of the Dee valley, seems to

me absurd. Parts of South Wales are still thoroughly, indeed passionately, Welsh, but the process of Anglicization has gone a great deal farther than it has in the North. Cardiganshire, a good deal of Carmarthen and Montgomery, and some of Pembrokeshire, are still Welsh-speaking; but the rest is now hardly distinguishable from the neighbouring counties of England, except for the hideous English, spoken with Welsh accent and intonation, which marks the inhabitant of Glamorganshire.

A glance at a map on which the physical features of the country are well marked will show us that Wales is divided into two almost equal halves by the Severn valley, which opens at Shrewsbury and runs as far as Newtown. Beyond that point a narrow defile leads through the hills and across the watershed into the valley of the Dovey, which expands into a fine estuary between Borth and Aberdovey. This is the route which the Norman crusaders of old followed, and it is the line which the Great Western Railway follows to-day for its through trains from London to Aberystwyth. I should recommend the Wayfarer, intent upon a tour in South Wales, to take this route, for he will thus be able to see at leisure all the finest portions of the country and then perform his exit, as quickly as he may desire, through the industrial gateway which lies between Swansea and Cardiff.

About Shrewsbury I do not feel that I need say anything, for it belongs to England and not to Wales. It is an ancient border-town full of old-world charm, which has always done policeman's duty for the centre part of the frontier. Recently, owing to the fact that railway lines from every part of Wales converge there, it has come into favour as the meeting-place of every sort of committee and conference where members are drawn from both North and South. The country about it is regarded by some zealous nation-

alists as a sort of Wales irredenta, and when it has been recovered, as someday they confidently expect that it will be, they designate Shrewsbury as the capital of a united and independent Wales. It is unfortunate that Wales should have no capital, and that no agreement can be reached with regard to one. Indeed, the lack of an administrative centre has been one of the severest obstacles throughout the centuries on the path of normal national development. Size and opulence would point to Cardiff, and such qualifications appeal to persons whose minds work on a material plane. Certain it is that no other sort of person would ever dream of regarding Cardiff as the centre of the life of Wales, for the very good reason that in no respect does it answer to that description. Caernarvon would be a far better choice; but it is small, as well as remote from big centres of population. Aberystwyth is central, and already owns the Welsh National Library, as well as a fine University College; but it is not easy to envisage a popular health resort playing the part of capital to a proud and ancient people! It looks as if the solution would have to be (as in the United States and in Australia) the building of a brand new capital city. But then, I suppose, we should wrangle over its site!

Let us then imagine ourselves comfortably seated at Shrewsbury in train or car, with our faces turned in the direction of the pale blue hills of Wales, here clearly seen on the horizon. For some miles we are still in England, and even when we have crossed the frontier it is the broad valley of the Severn that we are traversing, essentially a border country, neither the land nor its people being in the least characteristic of Wales. The Severn rises on the slopes of Plynlimmon, in Cardiganshire, the least known and most inaccessible of all Welsh mountains, and for a considerable

part of its course it flows on Welsh soil; nevertheless it must be confessed that the noble stream has played practically no part in the history of the Principality: it has not entered into the mythology or the poetic literature of Wales to any considerable extent. It is a border stream, associated with Saxon, Norman, and Plantagenet rather than with the Welsh people.

Welshpool is the first town of any consequence that we come to. It is the Assize town of Montgomeryshire, a district which roughly corresponds to the ancient Welsh principality of Powys. Now it is a rather nondescript region, some valleys running out of it into what is unquestionably North Wales, while other parts are evidently more akin to the South. For the sake of convenience the term 'Mid-Wales' is coming to be applied to it, though there is no real sanction for such usage. Welshpool possesses no feature of interest, and it is essentially an English town. Hard by is Castell Coch, the seat of the Earls of Powis, an imposing fourteenth-century castle, still occupied by the ancient family whose possession it is. As the public are not admitted, we need not worry much about it.

A railway runs from Welshpool to Oswestry, an ancient little town that for centuries formed a bone of contention between the Welsh tribes and the English invaders. Here the body of Oswald, the Christian king of Northumbria, slain in the battle of Maserfield in 642, was nailed to a cross by the pagan king Penda of Mercia. It was because of this savage deed that the place came to be called Oswestry (Oswald's Tree, or in Welsh *Croesoswallt*). But I cannot honestly say that the Oswestry of to-day deserves a visit, for it is nothing more than an ugly and supremely dull little market-town, with a population of about ten thousand.

After Welshpool, the next interesting place that we come to is Montgomery. It is now only a village, though nominally still the county town. Once upon a time, however, it was the centre of Norman power in those parts, for there Roger de Montgomery built his castle in 1072. Every trace of this early castle has disappeared, and even the precise spot on which it stood is in doubt. The ruins which to-day adorn the hill above the town are of a second castle, built in 1223. Here that most interesting aristocrat and philosopher, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, spent his youth. He was soldier as well as scholar; and it fell to his lot to defend, and afterwards to surrender, the castle when Roundhead forces besieged it in 1644. The gentle poet, George Herbert, Lord Herbert's brother, was also born here. A few miles farther on we come to Newtown, a busy little flannel-making town, with between five and six thousand inhabitants. It is pleasantly situated amid green meadows on the banks of the Severn, surrounded by well-wooded hills. Here was born, in 1771, Robert Owen, the famous socialist thinker and reformer. His busy life was spent elsewhere, but he returned to his native place to die, and his body reposes in the old churchyard. Only now is Robert Owen coming into his own, and people are beginning to realize that he was no fantastic dreamer, but one of the most sane and fruitful British thinkers of the first half of the nineteenth century. Tardy justice is now being done to his fame. Several good biographies of him have been written within the last ten years; a Robert Owen Museum has been installed in the house in which he was born, and a bust of him has been placed in the great building which contains the International Labour Bureau at Geneva.

Some five miles from Newtown is the junction of Moat Lane; and like every junction that I know of, it is a

ghastly place. There the wretched traveller, unless he keeps rigorously to the main line, is dumped down, and often compelled to wait for hours. The purpose of this particular junction is to make it possible to change into the local train which runs (crawls rather!) at right angles into Radnorshire, and thence into the heart of South Wales. If you are bent upon visiting Rhayader, with the beautiful adjoining valley now flooded in order to provide Birmingham with water, or the famous spas of Llandrindod, Llangammarch, and Llanwrtyd, this is the place at which to change. We shall visit these places later in our wanderings, approaching them from the opposite end; but for the present it will be better for us to continue our journey towards the coast. With some malicious joy, therefore, we watch the unhappy ones who stand on Moat Lane platform, while our express train bears us swiftly on.

Now at last we begin to realize that we are, without doubt, in Wales, and not in some hilly part of England. The hills grow much steeper. Trees give place to stunted shrubs, while great patches of gorse, heather, and rushes spread on every hand. Waterfalls tumble down the steep inclines. Our train groans and puffs through cuttings and tunnels, until at Talerddig, at a height of 692 feet, the watershed is reached. In this wild region there are several pleasant little villages at which a stay might be made. Good air, good walking, and good fishing are to be had in plenty. There are some very passable inns, such as the one at Carno, which rejoices in the irresistibly attractive name of 'The Merchant of Aleppo'. Welsh is universally the language of these parts. The next town that we come to is Machynlleth. Its population is something under two thousand; but its well-ordered life, its air of antiquity, and its woollen and tanning industries seem to raise it far above

the status of a mere village. No external evidence is needed to convince us that we are in a borough with a very long and respectable history. Many tourists find Machynlleth a convenient place to settle down in for some time. It will be found to be an excellent walking centre, for on every side it is surrounded by hills, many of them attaining to the dignity of mountains, which present a fine assortment of rambles of every grade. A true flavour of the long-distant past clings to this little town. In the main street stands the Royal House. There Owen Glyndwr resided for a time; and it was at Macyhnlleth that he was crowned Prince of Wales in the year 1402. A fine and picturesque Institute has now been built there to commemorate this association of the great hero of the nation with the place.

Just below Machynlleth we come to the River Dovey, here a fine salmon stream, but a few miles farther on opening out into one of the largest and most beautiful estuaries in the whole country. Travellers by road must cross, if they wish to go into Merionethshire, at Machynlleth, a dozen miles from the sea, for there is no bridge lower down. The last railway bridge is at Dovey Junction. There the railway bifurcates, one branch bearing northwards to Aberdovey, Towyn, and Barmouth, the other branch heading straight on to its terminus on the seashore at Aberystwyth. At Dovey, as at other railway junctions, one is frequently compelled to wait, and that sometimes for several hours. In such cases let me recommend our Wayfarer voluntarily to prolong the wait, and to visit the Llyfnant valley, a singularly romantic and lovely glen which runs up into the heart of the Cardiganshire mountains. The estuary is here the boundary between Merioneth and Cardigan, and consequently the boundary between North and South as well.

On the north side of the river stands the deservedly popular little seaside town of Aberdovey. Like Barmouth, it is built partly on the open sea, partly on the estuary. Except Deganwy, there is no more picturesque place in all North Wales; and with its fine bracing air, safe boating and bathing, first-rate golf, and splendid mountain walks, it is eminently a desirable place for a prolonged visit. The 'Bells of Aberdovey' have long been famous in song, and it must be borne in mind that Aberdovey is no mushroom growth of yesterday, but a very ancient fishing village, which was, in the thirteenth century, the seat of royalty. Here, in 1216, Llewelyn the Great called together a Council, representative of all his dominions, the nearest approach to a native elected Parliament that Wales attained to in those early times.

Legend tells us also that at Aberdovey, or thereabouts, Prince Gwyddno Garanhir had his court before the greater part of his patrimony was submerged in the sea. Long, long ago that part of Cardigan Bay which lies between Aberystwyth and Harlech was a plain, covered with smiling cornfields, and dotted with populous villages. The sea was kept out by dykes and an elaborate system of gates. Its end came in the fifth century, and after this manner it was: Gwyddno Garanhir was the ruler, and the keeper of the sluices was a certain Seithenyn ap Seithenyn Seidi, a man notoriously fond of the bottle. Indeed, the Welsh Triads name him as one of the three 'prime drunkards of Britain's Isle'. One would have supposed that a man with such a reputation would be the last person in the world to be entrusted with duties demanding unflagging vigilance, and upon the proper discharge of which the lives and homes of thousands of people depended. Wire-pulling was, I dare say, as rife then in Wales as it has been known to be in times

nearer to our own! Seithenyn was an influential man, and the post of Keeper of the Sluices was an honourable one. The rest follows! One day a great banquet had taken place, and the whole court had sunk into drunken slumber, vainly supposing Seithenyn to be sober and at his post. That worthy, however, was as drunk as the rest, and had completely forgotten to have the flood-gates shut. Night came on, with wind, rain, and a tide of unusual strength. Through the open gates poured the water, flooding village after village, and drowning most of the inhabitants. When dawn broke the whole of the province lay at the bottom of the sea, and there it has remained ever since. I have often thought that a temperance reformer might do worse than point his moral with this old story! How much of it is fact and how much pure legend it is difficult to determine. What seems quite certain is that this portion of the bay was, in the first centuries of the Christian era, dry land, and that, either gradually or catastrophically, at some later date, the sea spread over it. Even now there are places, miles out at sea, in which land shows above the surface of the water. Visitors to Barmouth, or Harlech, will have seen from the heights behind those towns long white streaks, stretching on a calm day for miles in the sea, and looking like gigantic serpents. Close inspection shows them to be causeways. It is possible that the tides may have been their makers; but the learned do not reject the possibility of their being of human workmanship. They are called a 'Sarn', the Welsh word for a causeway.

CHAPTER X

CARDIGANSHIRE

AT Glandyfi we enter Cardiganshire, and are thenceforth definitely in South Wales. No county possesses a more distinct individuality so far as its inhabitants are concerned. The 'Cardi' is known to his fellow-Welshmen almost at first sight, and certainly at first hearing! In fact a very decent type of man, he has, somehow or other, come to be lightly regarded—maybe because the majority of inferior parsons that have served Wales within the last hundred years seem to have hailed from Cardiganshire; maybe because vendors of milk in London, with their suspected partiality for water, have also very largely been Cardiganshire folk. It is a big, but rather barren, county. Its coast-line stretches from Glandyfi in the north to the town of Cardigan in the south, thus occupying the whole middle portion of Cardigan Bay. Behind this coast-line is a narrow hinterland, composed of marshes, and a high windy plateau; while behind that again are first some foot-hills, and then the great mass of Plynlimmon, rising to a height of 2,469 feet. Except for Aberystwyth, there are no towns of any consequence. Lampeter, Aberayron, Tregaron, and Cardigan are little more than villages. Agriculture is overwhelmingly the chief occupation. The coast is dotted with fishing villages, but the revenue to be derived from fishing in Cardigan Bay is very meagre; and the inhabitants of all these picturesque places are now beginning to understand

that it pays far better to attract and to minister to holiday-makers from England.

For many years the great drawback about Cardiganshire was the paucity of its railways and the extremely inconvenient arrangement of such as did exist. A main line, with an intolerably slow service, ran south from Aberystwyth to Carmarthen, always at a great distance from the sea. Even to this day there is no line along the coast. A branch line runs from Lampeter to Aberayron; but to get to Cardigan by train it is necessary to go to Carmarthen, and then travel all the way round by Whitland. All the many charming villages along the coast, such as New Quay, Llangranog, Aberporth, Llannon, Llanshystyd, Tresaith, and Gwbert, used to be inaccessible except to the cyclist; but now motor-buses run in every direction, and there is scarcely a spot in the county which cannot be reached quickly and in comfort.

Entering Cardiganshire by the main Great Western line, from the north, we traverse mile upon mile of marsh-land, on the south side of the estuary of the Dyfi. It is a desolate and unattractive region, chosen by builders of the line as the shortest route from Machynlleth to Borth and Aberystwyth. The main road skirts this great marsh on the inland side, several miles from both sea and railway. There are wayside stations, but until we come to Borth, no villages anywhere in sight. Nevertheless the journey is not without its charms. True that on one side lies an uninviting bog, but on the other is the fine tidal river, with Aberdovey and the Merionethshire mountains beyond. Many people go to Borth for their holidays; why, I have never been able to discover. A less enticing place it would be difficult to imagine. Of course the bathing is good, and the golf-links are passable; and that, I suppose, is all that some folk

ask for! Far more people go to Aberystwyth, and it undoubtedly is a much more attractive place.

The thousands who visit Aberystwyth every year in August probably imagine that they are in a place something like Llandudno or other holiday resort, but it is not so. At Aberystwyth tourists are but an accident: the true life of the place flows in quite other channels. In fact, there is no town in Wales which has a more sturdy and more influential, independent spirit. This, very largely, is owing to the fact that it is a University town, and one, like Oxford and Cambridge, sufficiently small for the University to dominate and to colour the life of the entire community. Many inhabitants of Birmingham are probably unaware that there is a University in their town. At Aberystwyth members of the University are perhaps in danger of forgetting that there are such things as townsmen in the vicinity! There is also, in addition to the College, the National Library of Wales, a magnificent and immense building standing prominently on the brow of a hill behind the town. Aberystwyth is justly proud of the fact that it was the first to be established of the four University Colleges. There were theological seminaries in Wales before the coming of the University, and the Church of England College at Lampeter possessed the power of conferring degrees. But about these institutions there was nothing national: they existed for the sole purpose of training ordinands for the Christian ministry. The idea of a Welsh University was as old as Owen Glyndwr. It was discussed sympathetically by Oliver Cromwell. But it was not until 1853 that a powerful popular agitation was started on its behalf. It took ten years to persuade people of the feasibility of the project. Then in 1863 a committee was appointed, and the task of collecting money was begun. The appeal met with a warm response,

and in 1872 Aberystwyth College was opened. From the start it was felt to be a real national possession. While attracting scholars from England and other foreign lands to its teaching staff, and drawing students from England in almost as considerable numbers as from Wales, it has always possessed a distinctly national note. The governing body of the Welsh University have never had the boldness to make a knowledge of Welsh a prerequisite for the granting of a degree; and it is consequently, unless I am much mistaken, the only national University in the world in which a degree can be obtained by a person wholly ignorant of the language of the country! Aberystwyth College has grown steadily, and has widened its activities to meet the new demands of the times. Soon after the Great War it added to the usual departments of science and arts a School of Music, organized by Walford Davies, and a School of International Politics, organized by A. E. Zimmern.

Aberystwyth itself is a pleasant town, with some eleven thousand inhabitants. In front of it the sea forms two small bays, and these are now bordered by two splendid bow-shaped promenades, forming together a walk about a couple of miles long. At either extremity of the promenade rises a hill, the beginning of some pleasant cliff walks. The town itself is built in the space between these hills, and behind it are other hills. Thus on three sides Aberystwyth is completely shut in, except for two narrow valleys which converge there. Only on the side of the sea is it open. The two valleys about which I have just spoken converge on the south side of the town; and there the waters of their respective rivers —the Rheidol and the Ystwyth—mingle with each other and flow into the sea. The College stands actually on the seashore. Close to it are the ruins of a Norman castle, erected originally by Strongbow, in 1109, and afterwards rebuilt by

Edward I. A mile and a half from the modern town stands the parent village of Llanbadarn Fawr, and a visit to its ancient church is a thing that must on no account be omitted. There a bishopric was founded by St. Paternus, Bishop of Vannes, in the sixth century. The church, as we behold it to-day, is an austere and impressive building belonging to the thirteenth century.

The National Library of Wales ought by all means to be visited. There is no need to ask anyone where it is, for it stands out on its hill, the most prominent object anywhere around. From the terrace in front an admirable view of the bay is to be obtained. But the visitor ought not to content himself with seeing the outside: he should obtain admittance, and, if possible, see something of the magnificent treasures within. Like the British Museum and the Bodleian, this library has statutory rights to a copy of every book published in Britain. Moreover, it contains a unique and priceless collection of ancient Welsh books and manuscripts. Wet days are not so numerous at Aberystwyth as they are at Festiniog; all the same, one of them will occur now and again. If it does, I can promise every intelligent Wayfarer that if he will but use it to inspect the National Library he will cease to make any complaint against the weather!

Apart from the Castle, the College, the National Library, and Llanbadarn Church, there are no buildings of interest at Aberystwyth, and we turn from the town to the surrounding country. That, for the most part, is pretty, without being exceptionally beautiful. There is a very pleasant cliff walk, which starts on Constitution Hill, and leads to the little bay of Clarach. The one spot, however, to which every Wayfarer wends his way is Devil's Bridge. A light railway carries the traveller thither over the dozen intervening

miles. The railway follows the windings of the Rheidol valley, rising higher and higher as bend follows bend, affording splendid views of pine-clad slopes and distant mountain-tops. There are also two roads leading there, neither of them quite so spectacular as the railway. Of the two, the shorter one, on the south side of the Rheidol valley, is by far the finer.

Other places have been called 'the Switzerland of Wales', but in my estimation Devil's Bridge is the only one that in the least deserves the title. Its steep precipices, rushing waters, and steep banks covered with pine and fir trees, do combine to give it a resemblance, at any rate superficially, to the lower parts of certain Swiss valleys, for example, to Rosenlaui or to Meiringen. I am not saying this by way of commendation, for I like a Swiss place to resemble Switzerland, and a Welsh place to resemble Wales. At best imitations are apt to be feeble things. I have no desire to mix two very different types of beauty. Still, I would not carp at Devil's Bridge, for beautiful it undoubtedly is. Only I do think that we should all (at least those of us who love the Alps) appreciate it more but for this haunting resemblance to Switzerland; for what we inevitably say is: 'Ah, how like Switzerland; but, of course, infinitely inferior!' It never enters our heads to compare Snowdon with the Jungfrau, or Bala Lake with Orta, with the result that each of the four reigns supreme in its own class. But I cannot think of anything more satisfying to the overworked man from the big town than to find himself set down, on a fine evening in late spring or early autumn, at the door of the very comfortable little Devil's Bridge Hotel; and then to sit outside watching the sun setting and the moon rising over the incomparable panorama of crag, torrent, and wooded glen.

Three bridges span the tremendous gulf through which

the waters of the Mynach and Rheidol rush. The highest of the three is the modern bridge which we use to-day, a sound but unimpressive iron structure. Below this is a stone bridge, built in 1753. This is the one which Borrow, and the many English tourists who visited the spot in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, describe. The original bridge, however, called in Welsh 'Pont y Gwr Drwg' (Bridge of the Devil), is still lower. Who built it is uncertain: tradition wavers between Satan and the Knights Hospitallers, who were landed proprietors in the neighbourhood! That first of Welsh travel-writers, Geraldus Cambrensis, records the fact that he rode over it in 1188. Since that day many famous persons have visited the Devil's Bridge—Wordsworth, De Quincey, Pennant, and George Borrow, to name only a few—and all have testified to the profound impression which the scenery of the place made upon them. It remains to this day completely unspoilt, for there is not a village, nor even a row of bungalows, to mar the perfect peace and naturalness of the scene.

Devil's Bridge is an excellent spot to use as a centre for walking expeditions in the district. Aberystwyth is too far from the mountains, but here we are close to them, and are, moreover, at an altitude of close upon a thousand feet, with perfect air and cosy quarters. A very pleasant, and comparatively short, walk is that to the mansion of Hafod and the neighbouring church of Eglwys Newydd. Hafod became famous in the second half of the eighteenth century, when Colonel Thomas Johnes lived there, and issued from his private printing-press translations of the Chronicles of Froissart and Monstrelet. The church is new, but it contains a famous statuary group, the work of Chantrey, representing the death of Colonel Johnes' daughter.

Beyond Devil's Bridge we come at once to the high

tableland which stretches between the shores of Cardigan Bay and the interior of Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire for a distance of some twenty miles. It is traversed by a good road, which, at its highest point, is fourteen hundred feet above the sea. In the whole country there can hardly be a more lonely or bleak stretch of road. Villages there are none, and even farm-houses are few and far between. In the summer months one meets with an occasional car tearing past on its way to the fleshpots and sociability of the coast resorts, but at other times it is exceptional to meet as much as a single shepherd in the course of a whole day's tramp. Nothing grows in this desolate region except short mountain grass, and its few inhabitants live by tending the sheep which roam over it in vast flocks. As far as Eisteddfa Gurig the road winds steadily upward. Here, in former days, a little inn used to display a sign with the announcement: 'The notorious hill Plynlimmon is on the premises.' Plynlimmon is still where it used to be, but the sign, like all things of human workmanship, has decayed and disappeared! Once past Eisteddfa the road begins gradually to descend, and to follow the valley of the infant Wye. Both Wye and Severn rise on Plynlimmon, and for the first few miles of their course they flow almost parallel with each other in an easterly direction. At Llangurig (a pleasant village, with a good inn, much in favour with anglers) the Wye turns suddenly to the south and pursues its way through the heart of South Wales to the Bristol Channel. The Severn continues to flow eastward, and describes a vast curve through the border country past Shrewsbury, before it likewise turns to the south, eventually to mingle its waters with those of the Wye in the Severn Sea.

I am in some doubt as to whether I ought to advise my readers to ascend Plynlimmon. By true mountaineers it is

held in contempt, despite its 2,468 feet. If the truth has to be told, Plynlimmon is not a pleasant mountain to deal with. It has no proper top, but is a great mass of elevated moorland without much shape or comeliness, and with extremely boggy sides. Those who, in the face of this warning, are determined to persist would do well to make Dyffryn Castell, a tiny hamlet some four miles from Devil's Bridge, their starting-point. There is no path up the mountain, but an irregular series of white posts give sufficient guidance as to the route. The whole mountain-side is open, and the only danger is from the almost omnipresent bogs. It is heavy going, and a good four hours ought to be allowed for the climb. Having reached the summit of Plynlimmon Fawr, most people will be content to sit down, dry their wet stockings in the sun, eat their sandwiches, survey the extensive prospect of moor and mountain, and then accomplish the easy descent to Eisteddfa Gurig, where they will, if they are wise, have arranged for a car to meet them for the six-mile return journey to Devil's Bridge. The indefatigable, however, will proceed to the adjacent summit of Pen Plynlimmon, which in fact is only some fifty feet lower than Plynlimmon Fawr. A really good walker would then probably elect to proceed to the source of the Severn, and then follow its course across the eight miles of moorland to Llanidloes. It is impossible to emphasize too strongly the desirability of providing one's self with a good map and compass if intending to depart at all from the well-marked routes on Plynlimmon. Mists are frequent, and the country is so vast and featureless that real danger may easily be incurred if proper precautions are not taken. Personally I should much prefer to be caught in a mist on the cliffs of Lliwedd than on Plynlimmon.

Travellers innumerable have gone by train from Aber-

ystwyth to Carmarthen, grumbling at the constant stoppings at tiny stations, contemptuous of the dull scenery, and only too pleased to busy themselves in the light reading of their choice. I do not blame them, for if we except Devil's Bridge, and a few spots on the coast, Cardiganshire is not an alluring country. In most parts of England its scenery would pass muster, but in Wales it is surrounded by competitors whose charms easily put them at an immense distance ahead. At two places only do I intend to halt, and that for only the briefest visit: they are Strata Florida and Lampeter.

Fourteen miles from Aberystwyth our train comes to a halt at the lonely station of Strata Florida (in Welsh, *Ystrad Flur*). Not far away stands the famous old Welsh Grammar School, which has given to the Principality hundreds, if not thousands, of clergymen. The Abbey, which is our goal, is situated three miles from the station. Not much of it remains to-day, and it is difficult to realize that this was, for centuries, the most important monastic institution in Wales. Like the majority of Welsh abbeys, it was a Cistercian foundation. When it was first built is doubtful, but all through the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was the political, religious, and educational centre of Wales. For the most part the monks favoured the cause of national independence. They were not great scholars, nor did any particular sanctity pertain to their lives; but they were excellent farmers, their conduct was at least decent, they were witnesses after their fashion to the value of the spiritual life, and they occasionally wrote chronicles, like the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Brut*, which are invaluable to the historian of to-day. At any rate, there can have been little sloth in the lives of men who had to earn a livelihood by tilling the peat bogs of Cardiganshire!

Another fourteen miles in the train will bring us to

Lampeter. In utter desolation the only region that I can think of to compare with this stretch of country is the Tuscan Maremma, between Leghorn and Civitavecchia. There is one bog four miles in length, hideous at most times in the year, though capable of magic transformation when summer marsh blossoms cover its surface. There are few signs of human habitation, but the black cattle which the traveller soon learns to associate with the Welsh countryside are to be seen in great numbers. They are not the long-horned, shaggy-coated, fierce-looking beasts which wander about the Maremma and over the marshes of Paestum, but small, compact animals, short-horned and short-haired. Many people regard them as dangerous, but in the course of a pretty long and intimate experience of them, I have come to the conclusion that fear is wholly without justification. A bull is a bull all the world over, and on Welsh farms he is to be found, and when found to be avoided. But the bullocks which roam over the hill-sides are quite different. One in a thousand may prove vicious, just as one dog in a thousand may bite strangers; but generally speaking they are as harmless as domestic pets.

Cattle and cattle-drovers were, until recently, an important and a picturesque feature of Welsh life. The drover's job was to buy cattle in Wales and to drive them to England to be sold, principally in the great fairs of Warwick, Barnet, and London. First of all he walked about the country, from farm to farm, offering a price for the cattle, which price was to be paid when he had succeeded in disposing of them. The next step was to gather together all the purchased cattle of a particular district and to have them shod for their long journey along hard roads. Shoeing cattle was a skilled craft handed down from master to apprentice, and governed by stringent rules; and different modes of doing

it obtained in different parts of the country. A good smith might shoe as many as thirty cattle in a day, and receive tenpence for each one of them. Roads were terribly rough in those days, and after doing fifty miles or so a second shoeing was always necessary. It often took weeks to drive the cattle from remote Welsh counties to the east, or south, of England. The nights would be spent at village inns, where a warm welcome was always in store for the opulent and generous drover. Not that the drovers were generous in their dealings with the farmers, if we are to believe one half of the bitter things that were said about them! The Welsh drover, with his herds of black cattle, was for generations a familiar sight on the roads of England. Defoe refers to them. Cobbett relates that he encountered two thousand of them between Cricklade and Cirencester on their way from Pembrokeshire to Sussex. Wales is still famed for its little black cattle, but alas, the drover has gone for ever! To-day the railway truck takes his place. Motorists will rejoice that the roads are no longer blocked by endless streams of bullocks, but lovers of the picturesque and of the antique will deplore their disappearance.

Lampeter, the Assize town of Cardiganshire, is a pleasant and prettily situated place. The River Teifi runs by it, and all around are wooded hills. The inhabitants number only about eighteen hundred, nevertheless, the little town is a busy centre for a large agricultural district. Its annual Horse Fair is quite famous. It lasts three or four days, and splendid horses are brought to it from as far away as Spain. About Lampeter there is also somewhat of the dignified air of a small university and clerically minded town. Its College (appropriately dedicated to St. David) was founded as long ago as 1822, and affiliated to Oxford and Cambridge. It received a

CHAPEL AT SOAR-Y-MYNYDD

charter in virtue of which it confers degrees in arts and divinity. Its main function has always been to prepare poor lads for the ministry of the Church of England. No one would claim that its products have been good from the point of view of scholarship, but drastic steps have been taken in recent years to raise the deplorably low status of its degrees and so save them from the universal contempt in which they were held. The College buildings are grouped about a quadrangle, and form a picturesque whole.

By far the greater part of Cardiganshire is rural in the strictest sense of the term. Even the villages are tiny and far apart. Many of the scattered farms are as lonely as any in the United Kingdom. It is only in comparatively recent times that the village has come into being in Wales. A century ago people lived in isolated cottages on the mountain-sides, and by the roads and by-ways. That is why there are so few old and picturesque villages in the country. Railways, also, are few in Cardiganshire, and though the motor-car is rapidly coming into favour, it would be fair to say, I think, that the horse enjoys more dignity and honour in this county than in almost any other in England or Wales.

There is one remote chapel to which the whole congregation, men and women, rides on horseback. It is a delightful and unique sight, and everyone who cares for a genuine mirror of the past would do well to make a point of seeing it. The little chapel (it possibly seats fifty people when tightly packed) is called *Soar-y-Mynyddoedd* (Soar of the Mountains), a name in itself full of poetry; and it is situated fourteen or fifteen miles from the town of Tregaron, in as remote a region as one could very well find. It is a low grey building to which a 'chapel house' is attached, nestling at the bottom of a narrow glen, almost surrounded by pine

woods. For miles around there is no vestige of human habitation. All through the week utter solitude reigns, but on Sunday the place comes to life. Dozens of men, women, horses, and dogs give to the quiet spot an air of great animation. In the towns of England the cry is that men must have their Sunday in the country, and consequently the churches are largely empty. Here an exhilarating ride over hill and moorland brings the family to the ancient and simple sanctuary, and for all these people it is quite evident that their Sunday devotions constitute the most important event of the week.

Time will not allow of our visiting the many delightful fishing villages which lie along the Cardiganshire coast. None of them are as yet 'developed'. Accommodation is consequently apt to be primitive. Still, he who prefers quiet to comfort, and is content with good air, fine rocks, blue sea, plain food, cleanliness, and a homely but courteous folk, will be glad to go to them again and again. New Quay (not to be confused, of course, with its more famous namesake of Cornwall) has achieved some renown; but there are other villages, like Tresaith and Gwbert, which have hardly begun to be 'discovered' by the holiday-maker, but are assured of a great future. For our own part we must again get into our train and hasten to cross the border into the adjacent county of Carmarthen.

CHAPTER XI

CARMARTHENSHIRE

COMING from Cardiganshire we enter Carmarthenshire by the valley of the River Gwili, and in due course arrive at Carmarthen, the county town. This is a pleasant place, and an excellent centre from which to explore the whole of the southern half of the country, just as Llandovery is a convenient spot from which to explore the remaining portion. And Carmarthen is a real town: not one of your new-fangled agglomerations of lodging-houses or miners' cottages. It is ancient, dignified, sleepy, and interesting, as befits a place which can claim a Roman foundation, and also professes to have given birth to Merlin the magician. Unreasonable folk have been known to challenge both these titles to fame, but no one can dispute the fact that Carmarthen was a very important place all through the Middle Ages, with its Norman castle built in the eleventh century by William Fitz Baldwin, and its glorious parish church of St. Peter erected mainly in the fourteenth century. All lovers of good literature and admirers of a genial nature will visit this church in order to pay their respect to the memory of Dick Steele, who lies buried there. The famous essayist lived for a time in what is now the Ivy Bush Hotel. At the east end of the south chapel is a lofty altar-tomb, with recumbent effigies of the great Welsh nobleman, Sir Rhys ap Thomas, who died in 1525, and of his wife. This able, ambitious, and politic man appears to have been

a great favourite with both the first two Tudor sovereigns. So powerful did he become after the accession of Henry VII that an old Welsh couplet declares that 'The King owns the whole island—except that part which belongs to Sir Rhys'. In Henry VIII's reign his fame was, if anything, enhanced. The extensive Dynevor estates were his, while in addition he held the offices of Chief Justice and Chamberlain of South Wales. So formidable was his power that he could afford to snap his fingers in the face of the Court of the Marshes, which sat impotent at Ludlow.

The 'sights' of Carmarthen town are soon exhausted, for, beyond the church, the castle, the exceptionally interesting museum, and a few fine specimens of ancient domestic architecture, there is nothing that need detain the traveller. On no account, however, must we forget to see the fishing on the River Towy, for there the coracle, associated in the minds of most people with the Ancient Britons whom they used to read about in their early schooldays, is still in vogue. Occasionally it is used on the Dee, and fairly extensively on the Teifi; but to see it in its glory one must go to Carmarthen. Most people know vaguely what a coracle is like, but in case there are any among my readers who do not, let me tell them that it is the rudest form of boat: a very light wicker framework, with tarred canvas spread over it, the whole in the shape of a heart. In the middle is a wooden seat. So light is the coracle that its owner carries it to and from the river strapped across his back, boat and bearer looking for all the world like a gigantic blackbeetle walking on its hind legs. The coracle men are a close body, son succeeding father, and interlopers are rigorously excluded. The method of fishing is for two coracles to paddle along with a net stretched out between them. Law demands that the nets should be so constructed as to allow all fish

under a pound in weight to pass through them. Nor must they be more than ten feet wide, in a river whose width is something like thirty feet. It is a dangerous, if interesting, trade, requiring much skill and courage.

There are several pretty villages in the vicinity of Carmarthen which are well worth exploring. The steep wooded glen through which runs the River Gwili, past Bronwydd and Llanpumsaint, provides an agreeable walk. Finer is the valley of the Cothi, known to every Welshman as the home of the poet Lewis Glyn Cothi. Comfortable quarters can be found at the little village of Pumsaint, and good fishing and good walking abound in the neighbourhood. Close by stands the mansion of Dolaucothi, where the Johnes family, one of the genuine noble stocks of South Wales, has its seat. George Borrow visited Pumsaint in 1855, and was so impressed by Dolaucothi that he wrote: 'With what satisfaction I could live in that house if backed by a couple of thousands a year.' Alas, the old squires of Wales have fallen on evil days; they are finding it increasingly difficult to make two ends meet, and the ancient estates are rapidly breaking up, or else passing into the possession of the New Rich!

But it is the Vale of Towy that holds an easy pre-eminence in Carmarthenshire. It is an exquisite valley, broad and smiling, and bounded on either side by steep and wooded hills, crowned in many places by ancient castles, rich in history and renown. The Moselle itself is scarcely more beautiful. The most famous place in the valley is Golden Grove, the seat of the Cawdor family. Unfortunately the old house was burnt down in 1769. Within its walls Jeremy Taylor took refuge from the troubles of the times, from 1645 to 1654, and there he wrote his *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. To-day may be seen at Golden Grove the drinking-horn

presented in 1483 by Harry Richmond to his host. A mile farther on is Aberglasney House, where the poet John Dyer was born in 1700; and hard by is Grongar Hill, the eminence crowned by an ancient camp, which he celebrated in verse. A few miles farther down the valley we come to Dryslwyn, once a castle of the first consequence, but now a heap of ruins. Near the town of Llandilo stands Dynevor Castle, so famous in Welsh legend and story. According to tradition it was built by Roderic the Great, in 876, for his son Cadell, Prince of South Wales. Throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries it was the principal seat of the rulers of that kingdom. Many a time was it besieged in the Middle Ages, sometimes successfully defying its foes, occasionally succumbing and suffering capture and pillage. By King Henry VII it was granted to Sir Rhys ap Thomas Fitz Urien, from whom the present owner, Lord Dynevor, is descended. The ancient buildings, however, have long disappeared, for the existing house was erected as recently as 1856.

I have already said that the northern half of Carmarthenshire is best explored from the town of Llandovery, and it is now time for us to transport ourselves thither. This we can do by a short and direct train journey. Llandovery is a small and very lifeless country town, with but little of interest within itself. Its present-day fame depends upon its College, which, together with Christ's College, Brecon, ranks as one of the two Public Schools of Wales. It was founded in 1848, to impart a Welsh education. Unhappily its early ideals were soon abandoned, and a series of ambitious, but unimaginative, Wardens, intent upon receiving deaneries and bishoprics for themselves rather than upon perpetuating and enriching Welsh culture, converted it into a feeble imitation of the big schools of England. They had

their reward, but at the cost of leading Llandovery completely outside the circle of national life. There are shrines at Llandovery beside which the lover of Wales would much rather linger than at this Anglicized College. Chief among them is the churchyard of Llanfair-ar-y-Bryn, where lies buried William Pantycelyn, greatest of Welsh hymn-writers, greatest perhaps of all the hymn-writers of the world. This supremely great poet and mystic lived in a small white-washed farmhouse a few miles from Llandovery in the middle years of the eighteenth century. He was caught in the vortex of the Methodist Revival, and gave in his hymns imperishable expression to its theology, its ethics, and religious experience. People admire and wonder at the beauty of Welsh congregational singing. Partly it is because the Welsh are a music-loving people; partly it is because they possess magnificent hymn tunes; but I am inclined to think that the most important reason of all is that they are inspired by the glorious poetry and the sublime thoughts put into the form of hymns by Pantycelyn and two or three other geniuses.

Llandovery has other literary associations as well. Between 1579 and 1644 Vicar Pritchard lived there: a great reformer; and the author of a celebrated book known as *The Welshman's Candle*. This is a collection of religious rhymes, of no outstanding literary merit, written for the common people in a language easily understood by them. To us the work is valuable on account of the light which it sheds upon the manners of its day. No Dissenter ever painted a darker picture of Wales in the first century of the life of the Anglican Church than did this candid and friendly critic. His house still stands in the centre of the little town.

Llandovery once possessed a notable printing-press, and it is interesting to know that from it issued Lady Guest's

famous translation of the *Mabinogion*, that fascinating mine of Welsh folk-lore.

Carmarthenshire, together with the neighbouring counties to the north, east, and west, is almost purely agricultural. Industry has taken firm root around Llanelly, in the extreme south; but mining, on a large scale, is concentrated in Glamorgan. On the whole the land in Carmarthenshire is richer than is usual in Wales, if we except parts of Anglesey and Denbighshire. The favourite type of farm is a small holding of some thirty acres, with stock in proportion. This the farmer manages himself, with the aid of his wife and children, and possibly a single manservant. Larger farms, of course, there are, but they are the exception. To-day there is great land-hunger in Wales, and nothing can appease it save a more liberal breaking-up of larger estates into these 'one-man farms'. Labourers are becoming increasingly reluctant to work for wages, and are demanding land of their own. There are at present in Wales about 40,000 farms of less than 50 acres each, and 12,000 of between 50 and 100 acres. In every respect it would be better for the country if this land-hunger were satisfied. Wales is certainly not making its proper contribution to the agricultural needs of the kingdom. Enormous tracts in the South are made over to rabbits, simply because the lazy farmer finds that it pays him better. Most farms are remote from markets, and the higgler has them at his mercy. He comes round in a motor-van and relieves the farmer's wife of eggs, cream, butter, and poultry for whatever he declares to be fair payment. This payment is so small that it provides no incentive to production. Consequently the farmer loses heart and produces only enough for his own household requirements. Prices therefore go up for the consumer. Poultry and dairy

produce are diminishing in quantity very rapidly. What profit there is goes to the middle-man, while the farmer is left unremunerated and the public pays through the nose. In Wales to-day the prices of greengrocery and of fruit are prohibitive. Such things are luxuries which the working classes never dream of buying; and now they are also getting beyond the means of the middle classes too. The only hope is from the excellent agricultural colleges which are now doing fine pioneer work in the country districts. Scientific methods of farming and of fruit-growing, coupled with wise distribution and a more free allocation of small farms, may lead to immense improvement within a short period of time. Unless this happens, the Welsh country-side will soon be left desolate, and its youth will flock to the mining valleys and the towns, there to add to the number of the unemployed.

The typical Welsh farm of the better sort is well worth a visit, and there are many of them in Carmarthenshire. In South Wales it is customary to whitewash the buildings, but in the North they are of the grey native stone quarried from the hills. Nowhere in Wales are farms built of bricks, except in districts close to the English border. The thatched roof persists in many places, and is in no sense a token of inferiority. Inside the farm-houses are roomy, and though destitute of many modern luxuries, are generally well stocked with the solid and beautiful antique furniture which fetches such deservedly high prices when it gets into the hands of the dealer. Only in extremity will a farmer part with his old furniture, for it has been 'in the family' for generations, and the Welshman is thoroughly sentimental. Everybody knows this typical Welsh furniture—the tall Grandfather Clock, the great oak *Cist*, the *Settle*, the *Cupbwrdd Cornel*, the dresser, the *Cupbwrdd Tridarn*, the

Cupbwrdd Deuddarn, and the spinning-wheel. Lucky is the family which owns such things: they may already be two or three centuries old; but they will endure when all last year's products of our furniture factories have turned into dust. Walls and shelves will also display a large assortment of antique copper utensils—warming-pans, candlesticks (especially the ancient variety used to hold rush candles), and the great pans (*Padell Foch*) used for preparing pigs' food. If perchance you are staying at a farm and sharing your host's table, you will discover that his taste in food is decidedly less conservative than his taste in furniture. Half a century ago farmers and their households lived mainly on a sort of home-made diet, comprising several unique dishes which are no longer seen. Oat-cake (large, thin, and brittle, not thick and crumbling like that of Scotland) took the place of bread. In the winter months salted meat was universal. Milk with potatoes (*Tatws Laeth*), and milk with oatmeal were staple dishes. Gone to-day is the oat-cake, except as a luxury; gone too is the *Llymru*, the *Posal*, and the *Tatws Laeth*. In many degenerate farms not even home-made bread is to be found!

It would be natural to pass from Llandovery into Radnorshire, for in order to do so we should have only to remain in the train which brought us thither from Carmarthen. But before doing so we must cast a glance at Pembrokeshire, that maritime land which stretches far out to sea in the south, just as Caernarvonshire does in the north.

CHAPTER XII

PEMBROKESHIRE

PEMBROKESHIRE is an interesting and, so far as its coast is concerned, a beautiful county. It has few hills of any magnitude. The greater part of the interior is composed of heath and bog, glorious with the gold of the gorse at certain seasons of the year, and closely resembling many parts of Brittany and Cornwall. The coast is bold and rocky, much indented, with deep and narrow coves, into which the waves rush with a deafening roar. There are many castles, for Pembrokeshire was one of the great Norman strongholds. Milford Haven was once an important port, and Fishguard has recently been used for the mail service to Ireland. Above all there is St. David's, with its cathedral, the finest church in Wales, and, from the historic point of view, one of the most interesting of places. Like Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire is very badly supplied with railways. The Great Western line enters the county at Whitland, and there breaks into three branches, one running due north to a terminus at the town of Cardigan, another running south to Tenby, and the next to the town of Pembroke, and the third running due west, and in turn bifurcating, part going to Fishguard and part proceeding south through Haverfordwest to Milford. Most of the choicest spots in the peninsula, including St. David's, are many miles from the nearest station. Now, however, motor-buses ply in every direction, and it is a compara-

tively easy thing to see as much of the county as is worth seeing.

Historically speaking, there are two Pembrokeshires. There is the northern half, which is purely Welsh in tradition and speech; and there is the southern half, which is English, and used to be known as 'Little England beyond Wales'. With greater accuracy it might have been called 'Little Flanders beyond Wales', for the non-Welsh element which preponderated there consisted of a colony of Flemings—skilled architects and craftsmen of all sorts—planted there by the great Norman Earls of Pembroke in the twelfth century. The plantation of south Pembroke by the Flemish, like that of Ulster by the Scots, became a permanent thing, imparting to the whole district a language and a character of its own. The Normans made much use of Flemish weavers and craftsmen, and 'liberties' were granted to them in many of the towns which clustered about Norman keeps. Readers of Scott's *Betrothed* will remember the vivid picture given there of the relationships between the two races. And so to-day one hears little but Welsh spoken at St. David's, or Fishguard, and nothing but English south of Haverfordwest.

It is quite unnecessary to dilate upon the beauty of sea and rock at Tenby, Saundersfoot, Manorbier, Newgale, Strumble Head, and many other places on the Pembrokeshire coast, for they are well known, and every year attract many hundreds of visitors. Their fame is well deserved, and, except for Tenby, they have not as yet been spoilt by trippers and all their attendant evils.

Visitors to Tenby may be depended on to visit Caldey Island, for do not motor-boats ply between the two places regularly several times a day? Permission to land must be obtained from the Abbot, and to visit the Abbey a further

special permit is necessary. Like Bardsey in the north, Caldey is holy ground, for there has been a monastery there ever since the fifth century. Famous men were bred there —St. David himself, Gildas the historian, St. Paul Aurelian, St. Maglorius, and St. Samson of Dol. These are some of the popular saints of the Celtic world, and to them, and their fellows, most of the churches of Wales are dedicated, and not to the universal favourites of Christendom as a whole. In the very early days of Christianity in Britain Caldey was as important a metropolis of the faith as was Iona or the Isles des Lérins. On the island we may see the famous Caldey Oggam Stone, a fine sandstone monolith, with a cross, and a double inscription, the one in Oggam (early Irish) characters, the other in Latin. The stone probably belongs to the period between the sixth and the eighth century. Somewhere about that time Caldey fell upon evil days. It was a wild and lawless age, an age in which exposed places along the coasts of Western Europe were always liable to be harried and plundered by sea-rovers; and from these rovers, who were mostly pagans, neither church nor monastery was safe. Caldey was taken and converted into a pirate stronghold. Except that it had an evil notoriety as a 'nest of the sea-kings', we hear no more about it until the twelfth century, when it passed into the possession of the Benedictines of St. Dogmael's Abbey, a fine foundation near Cardigan, which owed its origin to St. Martin of Tours. For four hundred years the re-consecrated Caldey flourished; but in 1534 the abbey was dissolved by King Henry VIII. Then followed another four centuries of secularization; until in 1906 it was purchased by Abbot Carlyle and started upon a fresh career. The buildings are extensive, but altogether modern, with the interesting exception of the high altar in the church, which is built of

stones from the ruins of the chief monasteries of England. The ancient Priory is now St. Illtyd's Agricultural College. Most of the buildings, dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, are extant. Evidently they were built, like so many other exposed monasteries on islands and sea-coast, to serve as fortresses as well as houses of prayer. In that respect also Caldey resembles St. Honorat of the Isles des Lérins, whose great square keep is well known to every visitor to Cannes. The monks of Caldey to-day live no idle life. Weaving, metal-work, illuminating, and printing are done, and done well; while there is an excellently managed farm and a large stone-quarry.

But while Caldey is certainly worth visiting, the true glory of Pembrokeshire is St. David's. Everybody knows that St. David is the Patron Saint of Wales, and a visit to the Principality ought assuredly to include a visit to his shrine. For David was not one of your imported saints, like Andrew or George, but a genuine home product, a man who gave his whole life to his native land, and whose inspiration has remained powerful throughout the ages. Fortunately St. David's is itself a delightful spot, so that a visit paid on the score of duty or historical interest is likely to yield abundant pleasure as well.

St. David's is a big village, as remotely situated as Aberdaron itself. It is built about a mile from the sea, inside a narrow gorge. So deep is the gorge that even the summit of the cathedral towers cannot be seen until you stand on its very edge. At first one wonders why this magnificent building was not placed on the brow of the hill, where, like Ely or Durham, it could be seen for miles around; then we remember how for centuries this coast used to be harried by pirates, and how a conspicuous and large building, known to contain valuable portable property,

would only serve as an open invitation to them to come and plunder. No, the men of old were wise in their generation: they built this glorious church, and the exquisite Bishop's Palace, as well as their own humble homes, down in a hollow, completely invisible to the eyes of rovers prowling about the bay. It is a pity that it had to be so; for St. David's Cathedral loses much by being, as it were, buried in a ditch.

There are now two routes by which St. David's can be reached. In the one case you take train to Haverfordwest, and in the other to Mathry, and then in both cases complete the journey by road. The second is the shorter route; but I recommend the former; for not only does it enable you to catch a glimpse of the ancient town of Haverfordwest, built long ago by Scandinavian sea-rovers, and possessing an old castle and a beautiful church, but also affords glorious views of the wild rocky coast around Newgale and Solva. From Haverfordwest to St. David's the distance is sixteen miles, and motor-buses cover it regularly several times a day. For my own part I like to leave the bus at Solva, and to do the remaining four miles on foot: for this is the ancient pilgrims' way to St. David's; and by treading it as they did we are enabled to see things precisely as they saw them, and to some extent to enter into their spirit. This is important. Some people profess that they see nothing in St. David's. On the other hand, I have heard it maintained that it is more inspiring than Rome itself. In both cases the impression is the result of the spirit in which the place was approached. To reach it in the right frame of mind I know of no better preparation than to read some of the ancient *Lives of St. David*, and then go, alone and on foot, from Solva to the shrine.

Ever since the sixth century St. David's has been a

cathedral city, and probably the smallest in the land; for it has only sixteen hundred inhabitants, and is never likely to have had more. All its architectural glories are concentrated in the imposing group of ecclesiastical buildings, of which the cathedral itself is, of course, the principal. The present building was begun in 1180 by the third Norman bishop who held the see: but the place was famous as a religious centre centuries before that; for we hear of William the Conqueror, busy man though he was, travelling all the way thither to worship at the shrine. The exterior is as austere as that of the Abbaye-aux-Dames of Caen, or that of Worms Cathedral, and equally impressive; but it is within that the chief glories are to be found. Most of what is finest in the interior dates from the years 1328 to 1347, when Bishop Gower occupied the see. But the masterpiece of that great builder was the Bishop's Palace, now unfortunately much dilapidated, owing to the vandalism of robbers like Bishop Barlow, who stripped the lead from the roof in order to endow his five husband-hunting daughters with the proceeds. This was one of the first of the long series of injuries which the post-Reformation Church inflicted upon Wales.

Cathedral and Palace are magnificent, and scarcely surpassed by any other ecclesiastical buildings in the kingdom; yet for me the most solemn spot in St. David's is a wind-swept meadow, on the edge of a mighty cliff rising out of the sea, where a few crumbling walls are still to be seen. These ruins were once the chapel of St. Nonna, the mother of St. David; and here, tradition tells us, the saint himself was born. A wilder, or more lovely, bit of seascape it would be hard to find. Standing amid such ruins, in such surroundings, a man must have had every particle of the spiritual eliminated from his being if he does not feel

himself lifted up into a world very different from the one in which he ordinarily dwells. Scenery and bracing air are beginning to attract strangers to St. David's. It would be churlish to forbid them their simple pleasures, or to deny a new prosperity to the inhabitants, who, for the greater part, are poor folk. But distant be the day when hotel and lodging-house, bathing-hut and golf clubhouse, have dispelled the fragrant memories of the distant past which to-day cluster so thickly and beautifully about the home of the greatest of Welsh churchmen.

The first of March is the day set apart for the celebration of the memory of St. David. It is the national festival of Wales, a day on which all school-children make holiday, most shops are closed, and patriotic lovers of oratory, song, and good cheer organize banquets. There is probably no town or village in Wales, or in the big cities of England which have Welsh colonies, which does not have its St. David's Day Dinner on the first of March. The popular emblem, worn and eaten, on the occasion is the leek, though it is now finding a rival in the daffodil. In fact, a vigorous controversy is being waged between the votaries of each. The difficulty is that no one knows which of the two was the recognized emblem at the close of the period of semi-independence. *Cenin* is the Welsh word for leek. In many parts of Wales it also happens to be the word used for daffodil. Hence the ambiguity. Obviously in Shakespeare's time the leek was associated with Wales. It is also noteworthy that King Henry VII, himself a Welsh-speaking Welshman, when he won the throne of England, clad his newly founded Yeomen of the Guard in white and green, the colours of Wales, obviously borrowed from the leek.

As I have already said, Pembrokeshire is flat for the

most part, consisting of open heath and wind-swept plateaux. Its monotony is, however, broken by the Precelly Hills, a long ridge, stretching for some eight miles in a westerly direction from Crymmych, a station on the line which runs from Carmarthen to Cardigan, and attaining at Precelly Top (or Moel-cwm-Cerwyn) the respectable height of 1,760 feet. These hills are not unlike those of Malvern, and the view from their summit is almost as extensive, embracing the Bristol Channel, with Exmoor and Dunkery Beacon beyond, and the whole extent of Cardigan Bay to the north, with Snowdon dimly visible in the far distance. Walkers, and lovers of fine scenery, will find much here to their liking. So will the antiquarian; for recent research seems to have established the fact that the stones of Stonehenge were quarried in these hills. Tradition, accepted and handed down by Geoffrey of Monmouth, had taught us that these great monoliths of Salisbury Plain had been brought from Ireland. This was a natural mistake if we assume that they were got from the Precelly Hills, and carried thence along the prehistoric route from Ireland. How such gigantic stones were carried, and how they were fixed in their places without the use of modern machinery, is one of the marvels of the early days of man upon which we can shed but little light.

The town of Pembroke is well worth visiting, if time allows. In the Middle Ages it must have been wellnigh impregnable; for its great castle stands on raised ground, almost completely surrounded by a broad river and an arm of the sea. The first fortress to be built upon this site was that of the Norman Arnulf de Montgomery, soon after 1066. As it was only of stakes and turf it did not endure long, but was replaced, about 1200, by the present keep, built by William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke. By that time

it had become an important place; and Geraldus speaks of it as 'the metropolis of Demetia'. Its history, from that date until it was finally battered by Cromwell's artillery in 1648, was a stormy one; but here we have no time to dwell upon it even cursorily.

The coast about Pembroke is rocky, and much eaten into by the sea, arms of which run inland for many miles. One of these arms—the famous Milford Haven—divides south Pembrokeshire from the north, incidentally forming one of the finest natural harbours in the country. Its almost unrivalled advantages were early realized. All through the Middle Ages the town of Milford Haven was used as a port from which to embark for Ireland; and many a stout baron, after enjoying the hospitality of the Earls of Pembroke, must have set sail thence bent upon winning broad acres for himself beyond the Irish Sea. It was from Milford that Henry II set out on his conquering expedition to Ireland, in 1172. There, too, a French army landed, in 1407, to help Glyndwr in his war against England. Henry Richmond landed there, in 1485, and began the march which was to end so triumphantly at Bosworth a few weeks later. A royal dockyard was established there in 1790, but was transferred to Pembroke Dock in 1814. The almost simultaneous transference of the Irish mail station to Holyhead dealt a final blow to the prosperity of Milford Haven, and it has never recovered its former position. But although the town of Milford Haven has suffered decay, the fine estuary is there in all its magnificence, a sheltered roadstead, suitable for ships of largest tonnage, ten miles long, almost two miles wide, and breaking into numerous navigable ramifications. These inlets afford excellent boating facilities at the present day; and for those semi-aquatic beings, whose idea of a holiday is to bathe three times a day, and to spend the

remainder of the time rowing or sailing, there are not many better places.

We must now leave Pembrokeshire, and retrace our steps up the Towy valley, through Llandilo and Llandovery, in order to see something of the two inland counties of Radnorshire and Brecknockshire.

CHAPTER XIII

RADNORSHIRE AND BRECKNOCK

RADNORSHIRE and Brecknockshire ('Breconshire' is an alternative form of the name) are sparsely populated, and somewhat barren, regions, made up of great, and elevated, moorlands, rising, in the case of the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains, to a height of close upon three thousand feet. The whole region, if we except the valleys of the Wye and the Usk, together with their tributaries, ranges from an altitude of five hundred to one of two thousand feet. Of scenery, in the sense in which that term is understood in so many parts of North Wales, there is not much to boast of. But high plateaux and open moorlands, the horizon broken only by low bare hills, with here and there a ravine whose sides are clothed with mountain ash, have a decided charm of their own; and it is not surprising therefore to know that these two counties have their devotees among holiday-makers. This partiality has, no doubt, been strengthened by the fact that there are in them a number of mineral springs of undoubted potency. The man who raves about Pen-y-Gwryd or Cwmbychan will probably sniff superciliously at Llandrindod Wells. But each to his own liking! The fact is that places like Llandrindod, Llanwrtyd, and Llangammarch attract every year a large number of people, not all of whom are doomed to go about in bath-chairs!

Of all the Mid-Wales spas Llandrindod Wells is easily the

most popular, as well as the most interesting. In winter, without its annual influx of visitors, it is just a large village, straggling along a declivity, the highest part of which is a thousand feet above sea-level, and the lower part of which slopes down to the River Ithon, a pretty tributary of the Wye. The latter river is three miles away. There are saline, sulphur, magnesium, and chalybeate springs; and they have been more or less in use since the seventeenth century. It was in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, that Llandrindod became an important spa, even rivalling Harrogate and Buxton. To-day it possesses all the paraphernalia of drinking and bathing, with an attendant host of doctors, nurses, and bath-chair proprietors. It also provides the mild amusements which always seem to go with 'cures' of the sort worked there! Much more attractive are the bracing air and the really fine moors, all open to walkers, which stretch for miles around. Nowhere is the scenery in any degree grand, or even beautiful, but it is nearly always pleasing.

Llandrindod has always been a truly Welsh holiday place. Of late, I am told, it has grown so generally popular that English people are having it all their own way there: the Welsh are getting submerged, and are tending to migrate to the less popular neighbouring spa of Llanwrtyd. Twenty years ago it was not so. English (of a sort!) has long been the language of Radnorshire; but in August Llandrindod was Welsh through and through. Even now it attracts large numbers of Welsh professional and business men and women; and the native language is as often heard as English on its parades, its bowling-greens, and its superb golf-links. A Welshman's conception of a holiday differs considerably from an Englishman's. The latter demands theatres, cinemas, and shows of various sorts:

A RADNOR VALLEY

the Welshman insists upon having a chapel, with specially good preachers engaged for the occasion, and demands at least one religious service every day of the week, with at least two on Sunday. At Llandrindod a Prayer Meeting is held every day immediately after breakfast, and everybody who 'counts' in the Welsh world attends it. On Sunday all the chapels are thronged. In addition to these regular events, there will be conferences, choral singing, and, very likely, an Eisteddfod. To suppose that, because these things form the chosen part of his holiday, the Welshman takes his pleasures gloomily is mere Anglo-Saxon insularity and prejudice. The man who has bravely drunk his saline from 7 a.m. to 8.30 a.m., and then attended the daily Prayer Meeting from 10 till 10.30, will not lag behind his English friend in zest, or in hilarity, on the links or the bowling-green during the remainder of the day. In the Middle Ages fun and religion went (as surely they ought to do) hand in hand. No one would accuse Chaucer's pilgrims either of gloom or of insincerity. The Englishman must try to understand that the modern Welshman has succeeded in making the same combination.

Most regrettably, as all its old lovers think, Llandrindod is rapidly becoming a place of huge hotels, preposterous prices, and fashionable clothes. No longer can the plain man, desirous of a quiet holiday, with good air and the fellowship of a few friends, at moderate expense, go there. It is a pity, for with the passing of the old Llandrindod something typical and unique disappears from Welsh life, leaving us as a substitute a mere replica of the already sufficiently abundant English spas. If Llanwrtyd Wells could have stepped into the vacant place we should not complain overmuch. But in spite of natural advantages, with surrounding country far finer than that about Llan-

drindod, it has never succeeded in attracting people in any considerable number. There is about Llanwrtyd a curious, but unmistakable, atmosphere of dullness. Still, to those who are not repelled by its obviously third-rate quality as a spa, I can recommend Llanwrtyd as an excellent centre for walks, as well as for motoring excursions. I shall return to it presently for the purpose of describing the surrounding country. Meanwhile let us go back to Llandrindod, and see what it has to offer in the way of expeditions.

An excursion which few visitors to Llandrindod miss, or ought to miss, is that to the Elan valley. The nearest town is Rhayader, a sleepy, picturesque little old town on the Wye; but Llandrindod itself is sufficiently near. A century ago, when Shelley used to visit it, the Elan valley was a wild and romantic glen, celebrated for its great beauty; but to-day it is to be feared that the majority of people know of it only as the Birmingham Corporation Waterworks. In fairness it cannot be said that the making of the great artificial lake has done much injury to the landscape. The only regrettable consequence is the flooding of *Nantgwyllt*, where Shelley lived for a couple of months in 1812. Another of Shelley's haunts as well, the house called *Cwm Elan*, now lies submerged by the waters. A circular drive of the valley, a distance of about twenty miles, 'may be recommended', as our friend Baedeker would say! For the walker the roads have been made impossibly disagreeable by motor traffic, at all events in the summer months.

The venerable and romantic Abbey of Cwmhir ought also to be visited. This beautiful ruin is situated about ten miles from Llandrindod, in the winding glen through which runs the Clywedog. Cwm Hir means 'long glen'—a most appropriate name for this narrow and tortuous valley. Like

practically all Welsh monasteries, it belonged to the Cistercian Order; and was probably founded in 1143 for a detachment of monks from Whitland. Civil war has played havoc with ancient buildings in England and Wales. In the Principality, Owen Glyndwr was the first serious offender; and the evil work was carried further by Henry VIII's agents and by Oliver Cromwell. Glyndwr destroyed the Abbey of Cwmhir, despite the fact that Llewelyn, last Prince of Wales, is supposed to lie buried within its precincts. This great warrior and statesman, Llewelyn ap Griffith, was engaged in war against King Edward I. The English army, in the winter of 1282, was laboriously fighting its way along the north coast, and had reached Penmaenmawr. Then the weather became so bad that Edward decided to go into winter quarters at Rhuddlan. Accorded this brief respite, Llewelyn departed on what was intended to be a flying visit to South Wales, in order to encourage his allies there. In a lonely dell near Builth, however, he was slain in a chance encounter by some Cheshire soldiers, who were quite ignorant of his identity. He was refused Christian burial by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Canterbury was always the foe of Welsh independence); but tradition will have it that his faithful followers carried the body to Cwmhir, and there, in darkness and solitude and silence, committed it to earth.

Llanwrtyd Wells is, as I have already remarked, a better walking centre. The rocky valley of the Yrfon is a pleasant place for a good long ramble. Even more so is the great open mountain known as Mynydd Epynt. Over it there are walks in every direction, long and varied enough to satisfy the most vigorous and indefatigable pedestrian. A pathetic interest belongs to these hills; for in the small farm-house of Cefn Brith, on their slopes, was born in 1563 the patriotic

and high-souled John Penry. Every visitor to Llanwrtyd ought to make the short journey to Cefn Brith. Penry's parents belonged to the Reformed Church; and the boy was sent to the ultra-Protestant University of Cambridge. There, at Peterhouse, he perfected himself in all the learning of the day, and also pondered deeply over the condition of his native land. The remedy which he conceived to be the only proper one for its ills was the appointment of 'preachers of the Word' to visit the hamlets and isolated cottages, and to awaken the consciences of the people by an appeal to them in their own language. Unfortunately this was a course which Elizabeth and her statesmen were not prepared to sanction. They knew full well what the results of popular preaching had been in the neighbouring kingdom of Scotland, and they were fully determined that no unauthorized word should be spoken inside a church in England or Wales. Again and again did Penry appeal to the Government to employ lay preachers in Wales; but it was of no avail; and from being a loyal subject he drifted into bitter antagonism to the State. He became a relentless opponent of episcopacy; and between 1588 and 1589 his famous Martin Marprelate tracts were published. After that it was dangerous for him to remain in Wales or England. so he fled to Scotland, where he became an avowed Separatist. Failing to persuade his Queen, Penry proceeded to defy her. He drifted farther and farther in the direction of opposition, until at the age of thirty he found himself caught within the scope of the Treason Acts. The result was a foregone conclusion; he was tried, found guilty, and put to death, a martyr as selfless as Thomas More to the conviction that the Tudor State was going too far when it claimed to control religious belief.

A few famous wayfarers there have been who have told

us that they much prefer Nature without human associations: it annoys them to be informed that in this cottage Carlyle was born, or that in yonder meadow a battle in the Wars of the Roses was fought. For the majority of us, however, I feel sure that it is otherwise. Yielding to none in our love of Nature, we yet maintain that charm is added to any scene by literary or historical associations. We like to tramp the border country with Scott in our pocket. We like to read Pliny as we drift lazily in a boat on Como. What would Lerici and Viareggio be without their sad memories of Shelley? Grasmere would surely not mean all it does to us if we had never heard of Wordsworth. And, though they themselves would probably disapprove, we like to think, as we climb some Alpine peak, that we are treading in the footsteps of Saussure or Leslie Stephen. Now the soil of Wales is saturated with legend, history, and literary associations; and he who neglects to acquaint himself with them loses a good deal of the possible pleasure of his journey. That is why it is good to visit such an ordinary spot as the birthplace of John Penry. The man who knows Welsh, and is consequently able to read the abundant poetical literature of the country, has an even more inexhaustible store of pleasure at hand. There is hardly a mountain, river, valley, or moor in Wales which has not been described by some bard of the present day or of bygone ages.

The little town of Builth Wells, near to which Llewelyn met his death, is just across the borders of Brecknockshire; indeed, its railway-station is actually in Radnorshire. It is a queer combination of market-town and spa, excelling in neither direction. Fashion has long passed it by; and its pump-room wears a forlorn look, in spite of the fact that excellent saline, sulphur, and chalybeate are dispensed

within its walls. There are a few well-preserved old houses, a really beautiful bridge over the Wye, and an interesting Norman castle dating back to 1091. Lovers of the bypaths of British history may care to walk the three miles from Builth to 'Glan Irfon', the house in which that amazing woman, Lady Hester Stanhope, dwelt before she embarked upon her wonderful adventures among the Druses of Syria.

From Builth one naturally pushes on into the heart of Brecknockshire. I use the word *naturally* in defiance of the railway, which describes an enormous curve in performing the short distance between Builth and Brecon. Luckily a highroad now runs right across the Epynt mountains and down the valley of the Honddu, in almost a straight line, a most pleasant road which I should advise every traveller to use in preference to the train. By taking this route a fair idea will be obtained of the fine rolling hills which make up a great part of this agricultural and pastoral country.

Brecon (in Welsh, Aberhonddu) is a good spot for a prolonged stay. It is beautifully situated on the River Usk, close to its junction with the Honddu and the Tarell. As a market-town it is of some consequence; and added dignity comes from the presence of a garrison. The population is in the neighbourhood of six thousand. It has a splendid church, a famous school, a theological college, and a few notable antique buildings. Add to all this, the fact that here Mrs. Siddons was born, as well as the gentle Henry Vaughan the Silurist, and that the town is within easy reach of some of the finest mountain and river scenery in the whole of South Wales, and you go far towards establishing a case for a prolonged sojourn at Brecon!

On arrival at Brecon most people will first visit the

Priory church. This glorious building was founded at the close of the eleventh century as a cell to the Benedictine monastery of Battle in Sussex. That ancient and interesting connection is preserved to this day in the name of the little village of Battle, about three miles away. The bulk of the present building dates from the thirteenth century; but the north and south aisles, the tower, and the east chapels of the transept, were not built until a century later. The interior is not only beautiful, but full of points of interest. At one time a great rood was suspended there, which was believed to possess miraculous powers, so that the poetry of the fifteenth century is full of its fame. Now, however, it has gone, and consequently a fine unimpeded vista of the whole length of the church can be obtained. In mediæval times Brecon must have been a hive of industry, for several guilds had their chapels in the Priory church. We are shown, in the north aisle, the chapel of the Corvisors and Tailors, and in the south aisle that of the Weavers and Tuckers. Other curious names cling to parts of the building, enshrining memories of a long-distant past. Thus the north transept is known as the 'Chapel of the Men of Battle'; and the south transept as the 'Chapel of the Red-haired Men'. But as I am not writing a guide-book I must not expatiate longer upon the treasures of this lovely church. In all Wales it is surpassed by St. David's only.

Another notable Brecon 'sight' is Christ's College. I have already observed that this school, together with Llandovery, constitute the only two educational institutions in Wales run upon English public school lines. Originally it was a Dominican friary; but Henry VIII refounded it as a collegiate church and school in 1542. The buildings as we see them to-day are mainly modern; but they contain a mediæval nucleus, in particular the choir of the thirteenth-

century church, which is now used as the school chapel. Appropriately enough the friars' refectory is now the school dining-hall; while the school library is housed in another surviving part of the mediæval building.

The whole country around Brecon abounds in beauty and interest. Pedestrians will find in the Beacons ample scope for their energies. Motorists will discover numerous excellent roads, with the possibility of long round drives, which seldom necessitate returning the same way home. Antiquarians will find Roman camps, unique churchyards, and the remains of prehistoric lake-dwellings at Llangorse, all within easy reach. Finally, those people who have the courage to avow that they ask nothing more than to be allowed to vegetate in peace, lying in luscious and flowery meadows, beside rippling waters and deep, silent salmon pools, will discover the banks of the Usk to be a veritable paradise. For the motorist there are many possibilities. The road by which we came from Builth to Brecon is over fine open moorlands, solitary as anyone could wish, with occasional glimpses of true Welsh life as lived in remote farm-houses and tiny hamlets. Another good thing to do is to go by the direct road to Llandovery, and thence follow the valley of the Towy through Llandilo to Carmarthen. We have already described that land of ruined castles and pleasant pastures, so need not dilate upon it further here. Most lovely of all, perhaps, is the road which leads from Brecon to Abergavenny and Raglan, over the pass known as Bwlch (*Bwlch* is Welsh for pass), and through Crickhowell. Not far from Crickhowell is a remote corner, a place of streams and waterfalls, known as Puck's Dale. Tradition tells us that this exquisite spot provided Shakespeare with the setting for *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Those who have seen it on a fine day in early summer will have no diffi-

culty in believing this tradition, for anything more idyllic and fairy-like it would be hard to imagine.

Every visitor to Brecon who is worth his salt will want to climb the Beacons. I have often thought that, instead of the much-abused examination system, a much more satisfactory test of character could be devised. Let the candidates be placed in a valley, at the foot of a high mountain. Those who instantly evince a desire to begin to climb are the sheep; those who apathetically linger down below are the goats! Luckily there is no railway to take one up the Brecon Beacons; but as the ascent, though long, is perfectly easy, no one need despair of accomplishing the feat, despite the fact that the highest summit rears its head to an altitude of three thousand feet. This great massif is the highest in South Wales. It is not a formless mass like Plynlimmon, but rises in shapely peaks of sandstone rock, conforming with the orthodox idea of what a true mountain ought to look like. On the north, which is the side approached from Brecon, the Beacons are steep; but towards the south they slope gradually into the great mining valleys of Glamorgan. From the summit you gaze at two different worlds. Turn your eyes to the north, and you see a purely agricultural and sparsely populated country, not materially different from what it was a thousand years ago. Turn to the south, and you are in the midst of the twentieth century, with its teeming population, smoking chimneys, acres of slums, and unblushing worship of Mammon. If some modern Satan wanted to show us both these worlds in order to bid us choose between them, I know of no more convenient standpoint than the Brecon Beacons! The panorama spread out before us is extensive and varied, though much inferior in interest and impressiveness to those seen from the highest mountains of North

Wales. Such as it is, it embraces the whole of Mid-Wales, the border counties of Hereford and Shropshire, Carmarthen, Pembroke, and Glamorgan, and beyond them the great sweep of the Bristol Channel and Cardigan Bay. When it is unusually clear, I am told, it is possible to see the Malvern Hills on one side and the Mendips on the other. For my own part I must confess that the distant things seen when climbing a mountain do not particularly interest me. Some people apparently find pleasure in the fact that they can see a dozen counties at the same time, or some object known to be fifty miles away. Sight-testing is all very well in an oculist's consulting-room, but surely on the mountains it is beauty that matters, whether it be far or near; and properly to see a beautiful view proximity is almost always required. When I ascend Snowdon I never trouble my head, or strain my eyes, to discover the Isle of Man, for I know that if visible at all it must be so vague that none of its beauty will appear. What I do look for are the ever-changing lights on the stupendous cliffs which flank the nearest mountains, waterfalls whose thunder I can actually hear, shadows which I can actually trace on the floors of the valleys at my feet, and the dancing of the wavelets as the east wind passes over the silvery surface of the moorland *llyn*. Counting shires, or peaks, or cities that can be seen from a particular mountain-top may be a pretty game for middle-aged children; but the true lover of Nature has nothing to do with it. There is plenty of this near beauty about the Brecon Beacons, especially on the northern slopes, which are deeply scarred with what in Welsh are called *cwms*.

From the Beacons to the Black Mountains, due east of them, is no great distance, and *en route* the Wayfarer can pay a visit to the Lake of Llangorse, or Llyn Safaddan, as

THE BLACK MOUNTAINS OF BRECON

it is more correctly designated. This lake is five miles in circumference, and next to Bala is the largest in Wales. Its surroundings are beautiful—hills rising in tier above tier, until to the west the summits of the Beacons are reached, and to the east the great massif of the Black Mountains. The lake is shallow and choked with reeds, plentifully stocked with fish, and the home of countless water-birds. Some of these birds, such as the bittern and the crested grebe, are now quite rare. But perhaps the most interesting thing about Safaddan is that remains of what were once the homes of lake-dwelling men have been discovered in it.

No one ought to be so close to it as Llangorse without seeing Trevecca, a place which in its own way is as sacred in the history of Wales as St. David's or Bardsey. Trevecca is situated less than two miles from the pleasant little town of Talgarth. To it, in 1752, came Howel Harris, the great prophet of Welsh Methodism, one of the two or three men who can be called, without fear of contradiction, the makers of Wales. He was intent upon founding there a community, after the pattern of that of Frank at Halle, or of the Moravians at Hernhut and Fulneck. In that curious blend of dreamer and practical philanthropist, Madame Griffith, he found a generous patron and helper. The average number of members of the community was in the neighbourhood of a hundred. Every member was expected to put all his worldly possessions into a common fund. The concerns of the 'Family', as it was called, were both religious and industrial. Three religious services were held every day, and on Sundays four. But industry held almost as important a place in the scheme, and it is that which makes Harris so prominent a figure in the economic and social, as well as in the religious, life of Wales. The first

faint indications of the coming Industrial Revolution were beginning to be descried in Wales, but it was the Trevecca Family that really brought the main ideas to the doors of the people. The industrial pursuits of the Family were interesting and diverse: they picked wool, carded flax, and knitted. A woollen factory was instituted, and a printing-press installed. Harris and his followers were equally interested in the development of the land. They introduced new and better methods of growing turnips and corn, and also an improved system of crop rotation. Like all communistic experiments, the Trevecca Family withered when the first generation of enthusiasts had gone. But Lady Huntingdon, meanwhile, had founded a Methodist College there, and it can be visited and seen in full working order to-day.

Between the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains runs the valley of the Usk. Not so well known as the Severn and the Wye, the Usk is scarcely less beautiful than the latter, while it is certainly more beautiful than the former; and to follow its course from the uplands of central Wales, past Brecon, Abergavenny, Caerleon, and Newport, to the Bristol Channel, would be to pass through many of the finest parts of Brecknockshire and Monmouthshire. There are several places which make convenient starting-points for an exploration of the Black Mountains. Hay is often recommended, but it is too far away for the purposes of the walker, and on the north side Talgarth or Three Cocks would be better. On the south side Crickhowell and Abergavenny are the best centres. The massif has several distinct peaks, varying in height from 2,000 feet to 2,700 feet. Between them they occupy a large area, and provide endless excellent walks.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH

IF we enter the mining counties of South Wales by Abergavenny, we do so by a very agreeable gateway. Indeed, several days might very pleasantly and profitably be spent there. It is an ancient town, with a population of nine thousand, beautifully situated at the confluence of the Usk and the Gavenny. There we are no longer in the undisputably Welsh county of Brecknock, but in that delightful no-man's-land known as Monmouth. The Romans, with their unerring eye for a strategic position, founded Abergavenny; and in the Middle Ages it became a stronghold of the Lords Marchers, whose object in life was to try to persuade unreasonable Welsh people to submit quietly and quickly to the theft of their land! Its church is interesting, and the fact that it was established as a cell of the abbey of St. Vincent at Le Mans is a good illustration of the internationalism which obtained in mediæval Christendom.

It is, however, as a centre for excursions that Abergavenny is justly famous; and if we except the Black Mountains, the best of them is that to Llanthony Priory. Like many of the choicest places in Wales, this is at a great distance from the nearest railway-station. By road it is a little more than ten miles from Abergavenny, but the journey can be reduced to six by taking the train to Llanfihangel. Immediately after quitting that picturesque little village, the road enters, and begins to wind up, the

very beautiful valley of the Honddu. Peace pervades the place in an unusual degree; indeed, no spot could be better adapted for a life of meditation and prayer. So thought a certain Hugh de Tracy, for he built here, in 1107, a house for Austin Canons. A visit to the Grande Chartreuse, or even more to the Great St. Bernard Hospice, in winter brings home to the least sympathetic traveller the fortitude and devotion of those men of old, who left the cities and the comfortable manor houses in order to live free from worldly attachments. Llanthony could never have been so wild or so lonely as many other religious houses which flourished abundantly; we can therefore only suppose that the monks chosen to inhabit it were poor creatures, for we learn that they had 'no mind to sing to the wolves', and so abandoned their new home, and settled down in more agreeable quarters near Gloucester. The original site, however, was not abandoned, and it became a cell belonging to the new priory. At the close of the sixth century a reforming Prior, one William of Wycombe, endeavoured to entice the truant monks back to Llanthony by building a fine new house for them. They, however, proved obdurate; but the buildings were completed, and it is their ruins which we see to-day. In 1811 Walter Savage Landor purchased the Llanthony Priory estate, and proceeded to build a house for himself upon it. His paternal discipline, however, soon caused friction between him and his tenants, and two years later, when he had spent £70,000, he abandoned his half-built house and the estate in disgust.

To-day Llanthony Priory is but a shell; within it we easily dream of the past, dreams which in all probability are so much fairer than the reality. This lovely valley, however, no longer infested by wolves, has attracted other religious men, for here was founded, in 1870, Llanthony

Monastery. Its founder was the Rev. J. L. Lyne, better known as Father Ignatius. Ill-luck, however, seems to attend every venture of the kind in this place, for Llanthony Monastery, like the Priory, is empty. It belongs to the Priory of Caldey, which we have already visited and described.

From Abergavenny it is advisable to descend the valley of the Usk at least as far as Caerleon. The railway from Abergavenny to Newport does not follow the course of the river, and it is consequently desirable to do this part of the journey by road, using the ubiquitous motor-bus. Many travellers would probably think it well worth their while to make a digression of a few miles to the east, in order to see Raglan Castle, a famous stronghold which lies close to the railway, which runs from Ross to Pontypool through Monmouth. Raglan is one of the best-known of mediæval fortresses, a mighty keep, built for the greater part by William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, in the latter half of the fifteenth century. It represents the mediæval castle at its best and most mature stage of development. Unfortunately Cromwell's artillery has been at work here, as in so many other places in South Wales; but Raglan has escaped the irreparable injury done to many of its fellows.

At the little town of Usk we need not loiter, unless perchance we are fishermen. It stands on the site of the Roman Burrium, and, like innumerable other places in South Wales, possesses the remains of a Norman castle. Beyond this it has no features of interest. Let us hurry on to Caerleon or Usk. Few places are more famous in song and story, for this is the *Isca Silurum* of the Romans. Here King Arthur held his court, and from it the Knights of the Round Table rode forth to redress the grievances of the oppressed. Its bishop attended the great Church Council of Arles, in

314. These things, surely, are title enough to glory for a little Welsh village of a thousand souls! It is pleasant to dream day-dreams, and conjure up visions of the past, among the green mounds and the ruins, with our Suetonius, our Tacitus, our Mallory, or our Tennyson in our hands. There is, of course, material for the serious student of antiquity as well. A preliminary visit to the interesting little local museum is advisable. Here one sees Roman inscriptions, and various remains of the conquering race, which have been unearthed in the vicinity. In the visitors' book can be found the name of Alfred Tennyson, for the great poet stayed for several months at Caerleon while composing his *Idylls of the King*. In a neighbouring field once stood an amphitheatre. It has only very partially been excavated, still its form can be clearly traced, as well as that of the Roman city wall. For another such collection of Roman antiquities in Wales we have to go to Caerwent (*Venta Silurum*), a place which has been excavated recently, and which has yielded abundant objects of value to the historian and the antiquary. As Caerwent is only a few miles distant from Caerleon, the two places can quite easily be visited together.

At Newport we reach the mouth of the Usk, which here mingles with the Severn and the Wye to form the Bristol Channel. We also find ourselves on the confines of Glamorganshire, a county which (let not the sceptic scoff prematurely!) possesses great treasures of natural beauty even yet unspoilt. It also possesses enormous mineral wealth, a population equal to more than half that of Wales, all the really big towns in the Principality, and several of the most squalid and most begrimed districts in the world. Truly it is a county of contrasts. If at one end you have the detestable Rhondda Valley, at the other you have the

lovely Gower Peninsula, with its exquisite coves and its unspoilt hamlets.

The student of politics, of economics, and the social sciences in general, will doubtless visit the industrial and mining valleys of Glamorgan, for where else can he find such abundant data for his studies? I would not have even the casual Wayfarer pass these things without at least a fleeting glance. It is a shame that so many comfortable folk, whose sympathy would at once be aroused if they could but once behold the conditions under which so many people earn their daily bread, never actually see these things for themselves. Let us then, as part of our training in citizenship, as a duty we owe to our fellows, visit these awful spots, outposts, as they appear to be, of hell itself. At present, however, in this book, I am showing the way to the beauties of Wales, and I am not going to concern myself with things which in no true sense belong to Wales, but are rather the hideous price which men are paying all the world over for an insane lust for gold and power.

Approaching Glamorganshire as we have done by the valley of the Usk, or travelling thither by a main-line train from London, the first place of any consequence that we come to is Cardiff. And Cardiff is, of course, a notable place —so notable that its inhabitants entertain no doubt at all of its worthiness to be the capital of Wales! True it is on the extreme verge of the country; that neither valleys nor railroads converge there in such way as to bring it into touch with the rest of Wales; that it is hemmed in by a belt of country which is Welsh neither in speech nor in mode of life; and that, except for the existence of certain national boards and buildings, Cardiff is quite undistinguishable from any busy English seaport; nevertheless Cardiff people insist upon regarding themselves and their city as Welsh. Of

course Cardiff enjoys certain advantages which count for much in the modern world. To begin with, it is very big; in fact, it is the biggest town in Wales. Again, it is very opulent. It has splendid docks, and is the greatest coal-exporting port in the world. To all this add the fact that it is the head of one of the busiest industrial areas to be found on our planet, and it would seem to all reasonable beings that Cardiff's claim to be the capital city of a land of poets, preachers, dreamers, and farmers has been proved to the hilt! !

Statistics prove to us that Cardiff, a hundred years ago, was a village with just under two thousand inhabitants. Behind that lay a long history, reaching back to Roman times. Impossible as such a thing may seem to visitors to Cardiff to-day, the place has even had romances other than those of the rise of the speculator and the profiteer; for there, in all probability, took place the famous sparrow-hawk tournament of 'Geraint and Enid'. The Normans, when they arrived on the secne, naturally seized upon it on account of its strategic importance; and the imposing castle which they built there became the home of the Lord of Morgan and Glamorgan. After many vicissitudes of fortune, the castle passed in 1775 into the possession of the Bute family. It is to the enterprise and the foresight of that noble family that Cardiff mainly owes its docks. Cardiff Castle is still inhabited, but it has suffered much at the hands of the restorer.

For the most part Cardiff is as mean-looking a town as the rest of its mushroom contemporaries; but one advantage it has had, an advantage which its governing body has most wisely utilized to the full, and that is Cathay's Park, a great open space, of sixty acres or more, right in the very heart of the city. Here, around a central garden, has been erected

in recent years as fine a group of public buildings as any British city, except London, can show. On one side stand the Law Courts, the City Hall, and the National Museum of Wales. On another side are the University of Wales Registry, the Glamorgan County Hall, and the Cardiff Technical Institute. A third side is given to the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. All these buildings exhibit contemporary civic architecture at its very best, and they certainly would form an admirable nucleus for the Government buildings of a future capital.

A visit to the docks, especially if our Wayfarer be an inlander, is strongly to be recommended. They are less romantic than those of the Mersey or the Thames, for one misses the great passenger liners setting forth on their travels to the uttermost parts of the earth. The five huge basins of the Bute Docks, with their five miles of quays, their thirty acres of timber ponds, and their twelve graving docks, are strictly utilitarian in character, but models of up-to-date efficiency. Coal is the *raison d'être* of the place, and the glory of these docks is the quantity of that mineral handled in them, and the phenomenal speed with which ships are loaded with it. In addition to the Bute Docks there are others at the suburb of Penarth, five miles away, a place which, with its esplanade, its gardens, and its swimming-baths, aspires to the position of a health resort. Just beyond Penarth there is really some quite pretty country, with good cliff walks. While speaking of docks, it may be as well to mention those of Barry, though these are nine miles away. The Barry Docks are serious rivals of those of Cardiff, but the visitor who has explored the one need not waste time in seeing the other, unless his purpose be something more serious than wayfaring. As Penarth is to Cardiff, so is Barry Island to Barry. It is not an unpleasant

resort, and charabanc tours are regularly organized to it from the Midlands!

When the Wayfarer has drunk his fill of the glories of Cardiff (one day will amply suffice), he will, if he be wise, pay a brief visit to Llandaff, which is now practically a suburb, and then make a rapid tour of one or two of the great mining valleys which constitute the hinterland, devoting to it, let us say, three days. Llandaff has had a cathedral since the close of the sixth century. The existing church was begun about the year 1120, and is an impressive building. In order to see something of the mining districts I should suggest that our traveller take an early train to Caerphilly, and contrive to spend two or three hours there. To-day it is a colliery town, not unlike scores of others; but it possesses the ruins of one of the largest castles in Wales, a magnificent specimen of the Edwardian concentric fortress, originally built in 1272. Its system of defence is marvellous in its intricacy and effectiveness, and I know of no better place wherein to study the siege operations of mediæval warfare. After seeing Caerphilly Castle and lunching in the town (its cheese is world-famous!), proceed by train to Merthyr Tydvil, and make it your headquarters for the night. It is a hideous place, dirty and noisy, and typical of all that is worst in the South Wales coalfield. Except for the place itself as a whole, there is nothing there to *see*; one ought to walk about its streets, observing the houses, the shops, the public-houses, and the people. Carlyle's comment upon it, in 1850, was as follows: 'Such a set of unguided, hard-worked, fierce, and miserable-looking sons of Adam I never saw before. Ah me! It is like a vision of Hell, and will never leave me, that of these poor creatures toiling, all in sweat and dirt, amid their furnaces, pits, and rolling-mills. The town might be one of the prettiest

places in the world. It *is* one of the sootiest, squalidest, and ugliest: all cinders and dust-mounds and soot.' Except that there are now more inhabitants, and that instead of being overworked, they are often sadly in need of work at all, this description might equally serve for the Merthyr, and for many another town, of to-day.

On the second day of our tour, a leisurely exploration of a neighbouring valley, from Aberdare to Pontypool, might be made. To pass from the Wye valley to the valley of the Rhondda, not many miles distant, is to go by one leap from the *Paradiso* to the *Inferno*; one finds it difficult to believe that the two can coexist in the same district, or even in the same country. The third day of our tour should be devoted to the Rhondda, for it is perhaps the most typical, as it is the most depressing, of all these black spots.

To all outward appearances life in industrial Glamorgan is grimy and sordid through and through. And yet, quite recently, before the iron of unemployment and hopelessness had entered into the soul of the people, there was abundant intellectual and spiritual life among them. They were, and still are, keen politicians, now, almost to a man, supporters of the left wing of the Labour Party. But the Eisteddfod finds these valleys a congenial home. No male-voice choirs can sing like those of Glamorgan, and there is no more exquisite pleasure than to hear a number of Rhondda colliers rendering one after another of the great hymn-tunes of Wales. No orator, pulpit or platform, could wish for a more appreciative audience, one more easy to move, or one more quick to grasp a point. Of course the admixture of aliens is considerable, for every coalfield tends to breed a cosmopolitan population, especially when it adjoins a great seaport; nevertheless the Welsh element has more than held its own.

I have recommended this three days' tour of the coalfields more or less as a duty, and having performed it, our Wayfarer will, I know, be only too glad to turn his steps again in the direction of beauty, cleanliness, simplicity, and health. To find all these things he will only have to follow the coast route westward from Cardiff. Only some eighteen miles from Cardiff he will be able, at Llantwit Major, to forget the grime and the squalor of the modern industrial world in the contemplation of one of the most old-fashioned and historic villages in all Wales. Llantwit Major was once known as Llanilltyd, after Illtyd, one of the first and most popular of Celtic saints. Here, in the fifth century, he founded a school and monastery, over which he presided in person. Many famous men were associated with the place in those early days, for if Wales had its Canterbury at St. David's, it had its Oxford at Llanilltyd. The church is full of priceless relics of Celtic Christianity—sculptured pillars and cross-shafts, Runic inscriptions, and all sorts of carved stone; while in the churchyard stands one of the most perfect specimens of a mediæval cross in existence, restored, it is true, but restored skilfully and worthily. By all means visit Llantwit Major, and stay there long enough to drink in its rustic charm and its saintly memories. At the White Hart you will find comfortable quarters, and a landlady of the old-fashioned sort, who will not only warm your heart by the sincerity of her welcome, but also please your pocket by the moderation of her charges!

We are now in the Vale of Glamorgan. Famous in song and story, its inhabitants still boast about its beauty. And beautiful it certainly is, though I fancy that it has earned more praise than is its just meed, owing to the contrast between it and the indescribably hideous mining valleys which are its near neighbours. We pass through such places

THE WORMS HEAD, GOWER

as Bridgend, Port Talbot, and Aberafon, without any desire to linger, and then come to Neath. Once upon a time Neath must have been a pretty place, for even now a wholesale worship of coal, iron, and copper goods has not quite destroyed its picturesqueness. The Abbey ought to be visited, though the beauty of its stones has been sadly spoilt by smoke. Beyond Neath the railway passes through a region desolate and awful beyond all others even in Glamorganshire. Copper works emit particular acid fumes which, though innocuous so far as human beings are concerned, destroy every vestige of plant life. The ground is utterly bare, save for a hideous crop of yellow camomile, and is littered with slag-heaps. Even Swansea is better than this, and the traveller may well rejoice when he finds himself in its busy, and not unpleasant, streets.

Nevertheless, except as a centre for excursions, Swansea is no place for the Wayfarer. It is a huge town, with a population of 160,000, a port of some consequence, and one of the biggest metal-working centres in the world. It has copper, silver, lead, tin, nickel, zinc, cobalt, and iron, all undergoing the process of refining, and it is the chief port for the export of anthracite. But what have we as travellers to do with such things? Let us leave them to the scientist, the industrialist, and the sociologist, and hasten on to find the sea and cliffs so dear to our hearts, things which are to be found in perfection in this unpromising neighbourhood.

Passenger boats ply from Swansea, across the Bristol Channel, to Ilfracombe, Clovelly, Lundy Island, Minehead, Weston, and Bristol; but as these places are in Devon and Somerset, and not in Wales, it does not fall to us here to say anything about them. What does concern us is the Gower Peninsula, to which Swansea is the natural gate.

For many people, no doubt, Gower simply means the

Mumbles, with its pier, promenades, and beach crowded at all times with miners and their families. But even much vulgarization after the manner of Blackpool and Margate has not quite succeeded in spoiling the Mumbles. Its rocks are so gigantic, its two islets are so shapely, and the seas which beat against it are so fine, that it rises superior to all human handicaps. All the same, it must be admitted that the lover of nature is more likely to find what he wants farther west. And there lies the Gower Peninsula all before him, fifteen miles of bold cliffs and wooded ravines, inhabited by a primitive folk, and exhibiting every sort of geological, botanical, and antiquarian interest. It is a paradise for the pedestrian and the painter. There are hardly any railways, and hardly any inns at which decent accommodation is to be obtained. This latter serious defect is, however, being remedied, and it is now possible to stay with comfort at Langland Bay, Caswell Bay, Pwll-du Bay, Bishopston, Park Mill, Port Eynon, and a few other places. Personally, I should recommend Port Eynon, which is easily reached by means of the motor service from Swansea to Rhossili, for unsophisticated persons who are content with plain lodgings, fine sea-views, and inexhaustible walks and scrambles over cliff and heath. When the gorse is in bloom (and when in Wales is the gorse not in bloom?) the whole peninsula looks as if it were spread with a gorgeous yellow carpet. And is there anything really more lovely than gorse-covered cliffs sloping down to a blue sea? That is what one gets in so many parts of western Wales—in Gower, in Pembroke, in Cardigan, and in Lleyn. A cliff walk as fine as any in the kingdom is that from Port Eynon to Worms Head, the extreme point of Gower, nine miles away. The whole thing is magnificent; for even if we could tire of the sea, and of rocks beaten into fantastic shapes,

LUDLOW

there would still be smugglers' holes to discover, caves to explore, and fossils to find. Worms Head itself is an attractive spot. It consists of two rocky islets, connected with the mainland by a causeway which is accessible for a few hours only during low tide. The Outer Head rises to a height of two hundred feet, and the dashing of the waves against it in rough weather is a sight not easily forgotten or surpassed. Rhossili is the nearest village to Worms Head. It is—as such a name would prepare one to expect—a quaint little place. There is no hotel, but comfortable lodgings may be found in neighbouring farms and cottages.

Here our journeyings through Wales must end. We have seen much, but there is much which we have not seen; for it is as true of Wales as it is of every land worth travelling in, that the more one sees the more does one discover that there is to see. I think I can fairly claim that if I have not led my readers to every delectable spot, I have at least put them in the way of getting to it for themselves. After all, he is but a poor guide who does not leave to the traveller himself a little of the joy of exploration and discovery.

One big omission there is! I have said nothing about the Wye valley between Chepstow and Ross. My excuse is that that region, which is one of the favourite beauty spots of Britain, would belong equally to a book about England, and that I could ill-afford to neglect less well-known districts in the heart of Wales in order to add another description to the hundreds which have already been written of Chepstow, Tintern, Symonds Yat, and Ross. Let our Wayfarer, if he still retains some of the zest of travel, visit these places before finally turning his back on Wales. And let him say his final good-bye at Ludlow. From the battlements of

its great castle, or from the tower of its glorious church, the hills of Wales lie outstretched before you. Here sat the Council which the Tudor kings set to govern the turbulent Welshmen of their day. Here there gathered all the chivalry of the Marches. Here lived Arthur, eldest son of Henry VII, called by his father after the greatest of Welsh heroes. Here Milton sat witnessing the first performance of his work *Comus*. Beauty, blood, song, and romance seem all to blend harmoniously in this spot—a fitting emblem of the little country which has had so much of these things inextricably woven in its history.

INDEX

Aberdaron, 123–4
Aberdovey, 147–8
Abergavenny, 195
Aberglaslyn, Pass of, 110, 129
Abersoch, 122
Aberystwyth, 14, 142, 151–3
Anglesey, 6, 137–8
Aran Benllyn, 63
Aran Mawddwy, 63, 64
Ardudwy, Drws, 101
Arenig, 66

Bala, 7, 14, 53, 62, 70, 76
Bangor, 129, 136
Bangor Iscoed, 16, 26
Bardsey, 27, 124–6
Barmouth, 83, 94–6
Barry, 201
Beaumaris, 13, 14
Beddgelert, 130
Berwyn, 48
Berwyn Hills, 52
Bettws-y-Coed, 129, 134
Black Mountains, 192, 193
Bontddu, 90
Borrow, George, 44, 165
Borth, 150
Brecon, 188–90
Brecon Beacons, 190–2
Builth, 14, 185, 187

Cader Idris, 81, 85–9
Caergai, 7
Caerleon, 5, 6, 14, 197
Caernarvon, 7, 13, 14, 116, 129
Caerphilly, 202
Caerwent, 8, 198
Caerwys, 14
Caldey, 172–4
Capel Curig, 130
Cardiff, 14, 199
Cardigan, 14
Cardigan Bay, 93
Carmarthen, 8, 13, 163–5
Carrog, 48
Ceiriog, poet, 34, 39–41
Ceiriog Valley, 39–45
Chepstow, 207
Chester, 6, 12
Chirk, 34, 39
Christianity (in Wales), 15
Climate, 49, 50
Clwyd, Vale of, 52, 54–9
Clynnog, 117–19
Colwyn Bay, 138
Conway, 7, 13, 14, 139
Coracles, 164
Corwen, 48, 51–60
Cowbridge, 14
Crafnant, 134
Crib Goch, 128, 132
Crib-y-Rhiw, 101

Criccieth, 13, 14, 110–12
Cwmbychan, 103, 104
Cwmhir, 184
Cymmer Abbey, 92

Dee, 26, 29, 48–81
Deganwy, 139
Denbigh, 55
Devil's Bridge, 153–5
Dinas Bran, 30, 33
Diphwys, 92, 100, 101
Dolgelley, 81
Dovey, 146
Druids, 6
Dyffryn, 96–100
Dynevor, 166

Edward I, 13
Edwards, O. M., 41, 64–5
Elan Valley, 184
Epynt, 185

Farms, 168–70
Festiniog Blaenau, 7, 8, 107, 109
Festiniog Llan, 107
Flemings, 172
Flint, 6, 13

Glyders, 126, 133, 134
Glyn Cothi, 165
Glyndwr, Owen, 14, 48, 84
Glyndyfrdwy, 48, 49
Golden Grove, 165
Gower, 205–7

Harlech, 13, 14, 105–7
Harris, Howel, 193–4
Hawarden, 26
Hereford, 12
Hotels, 31–2

Lampeter, 159–61
Landladies (Welsh), 31
Langland Bay, 206
Language, Welsh, 18–19
Llanberis, 129, 130
Llandaff, 202
Llandovery, 8, 166–8
Llandrindod Wells, 181–3
Llandudno, 138
Llanfyllin, 14
Llangollen, 29–47
Llangorse, 190, 192–3
Llannwchllyn, 63
Llanrwst, 134
Llanthony, 195–97
Llantwit Major, 16, 204
Llanwrtyd, 183, 185
Llanystumdwy, 112
Llawllech, 92, 99
Llethr, 99, 101
Llewelyn, Prince, 13
Lleyn, 117–26
Lliwedd, 128, 130
Llyfnant Valley, 146
Ludlow, 207

Mabinogion, 10, 168
Machynlleth, 7, 145
Maentwrog, 107, 109
Maes-y-Garnedd, 37, 102
Mawddach, 86, 90–3
Menai Straits, 137

Merthyr, 202
Milford Haven, 179
Mochras, 98
Moel Siabod, 130, 133
Moelfre, 99
Monasteries, 15–17
Montgomery, 14, 144
Mumbles, 206

Nannau, 84
Nant Ffrancon, Pass of, 136
Neath, 14, 205
Nevin, 117, 119
Newburgh, 14
Newport, 14
Newtown, 144
Normans, 10–13

Offa's Dyke, 11
Ogwen, 127, 130, 134, 136
Oswestry, 143

Pembroke, 178
Penmaenmawr, 138
Pennal, 7
Pennant, 113–15
Penry, John, 186
Pen-y-Gwryd, 126, 127, 130–32
Pen-y-Pass, 127, 130–32
Pistyll Rhaiadr, 43, 44
Plas Eglwyseg, 36–8
Plynlimmon, 156–7
Port Eynon, 206
Portmadoc, 110, 129
Preaching, 70–5
Precelly Hills, 178
Pwllheli, 117, 120

Quellyn, 127

Raglan, 197
Railways, 20–1, 52, 79–80
Rhinog, 99, 101–3
Rhondda, 203
Rhuddlan, 13, 14, 58
Rivals, 119–20
Roman Roads, 7
Roman Steps, 8, 103
Romans, 4–9
Ross, 207
Ruthin, 55

St. Asaph, 56–8
St. David, 10
St. David's, 174
Severn, 142, 156
Sheep, Welsh, 67–70
Shrewsbury, 12, 141
Snowdon, 115, 126–35
Soar-y-Mynyddoedd, 161
Strata Florida, 158
Swansea, 205

Talyllyn, 85, 86
Tenby, 172
Tomen-y-Mur, 7
Towy, 8, 164, 165
Towyn, 86
Trawsfynydd, 7, 8, 66, 102
Trevecca, 193–4
Tryfan, 128, 133, 136

Usk, 14, 197
Usk, River, 190, 197–8

Valle Crucis, 34
Vyrnwy, Lake, 53

Welshpool, 14, 143
Worms Head, 206
Wrexham, 22–6
Wroxeter, 5–7
Wye, 156, 184, 207
Wynnstay, 25

Yale, Elihu, 23

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 10025 905 8

THE PARK STREET LIBRARY OF TRAVEL

We take pleasure in announcing this attractive new series, composed of standard travel books in handy pocket size.

These volumes will be found indispensable to any traveler who would understand and appreciate to the full the lands he is to visit.

It is hard to conceive of a more welcome *bon voyage* gift than one or all of the attractive volumes listed below.

Tawny Spain
H. C. Chatfield-Taylor

Around the World
Robert Frothingham

English Hours *Henry James*

A Little Tour in France
Henry James

Italian Journeys
William Dean Howells

Greece and the Ægean Islands
Philip S. Marden

Travels in Spain *Philip S. Marden*

The Ideal Italian Tour
Henry James Forman

Price, each, $2.25, except 'Around the World' and 'Tawny Spain,' which are $3.00 each.

THE WAYFARER SERIES

A new series of travel books, handsomely made, lavishly illustrated, and serving equally as practical guides for the tourist and as good reading for the stay-at-home

A WAYFARER IN ALSACE
By B. S. Townroe

A WAYFARER IN THE WEST INDIES
By Algernon Aspinall

A WAYFARER IN SPAIN
By Alice M. S. Newbigin

A WAYFARER IN EGYPT
By Annie A. Quibell

A WAYFARER IN THE PYRENEES
By E. I. Robson

A WAYFARER ON THE LOIRE
By E. I. Robson

A WAYFARER IN PROVENCE
By E. I. Robson

A WAYFARER IN AUSTRIA
By G. E. R. Gedye

A WAYFARER IN BAVARIA
By Suzanne St. Barbe Baker

A WAYFARER IN PORTUGAL
By Philip S. Marden

A WAYFARER ON THE SEINE
By E. I. Robson

A WAYFARER IN SWEDEN
By Frederic Whyte

A WAYFARER IN SWITZERLAND
By J. F. Muirhead

A WAYFARER IN THE DOLOMITES
By S. H. Hamer

A WAYFARER IN UNFAMILIAR JAPAN
By Walter Weston

A WAYFARER IN FRENCH VINEYARDS
By E. I. Robson

A WAYFARER ON THE RHINE
By Malcolm Letts

'The place we're in is always *here*, the other place is *there*,' sings the poet. For those who long for *there* the 'Wayfarer' series seem to me to supply the best first-aid. Although they make no pretense to be guide-books in the ordinary use of that term, they say enough both to pave the way for visits to the countries described and to create the desire to visit them. Armed with a 'Wayfarer' volume, the adventurous traveler can, at any rate, set his foot on the new desired soil with confidence. — E. V. Lucas.